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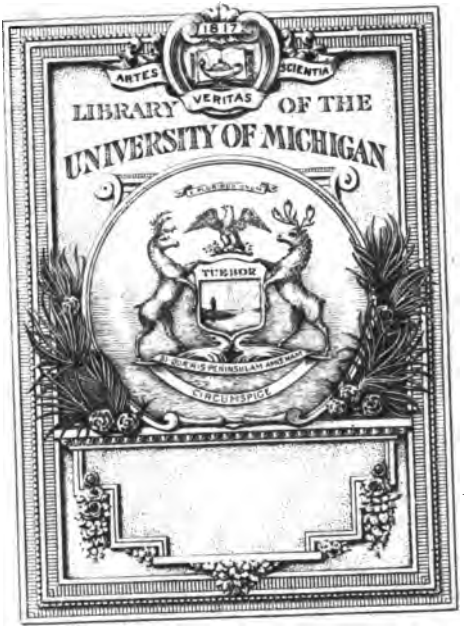
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CHARLES ELWOOD.

CHARLES ELWOOD:

OR

THE INFIDEL CONVERTED.

BY O. A. BROWNSON.

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MDCCCXL.
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PREFACE.

I HAVE not much to say by way of preface to this little volume. It explains itself, and contains in itself the grounds of its own justification or condemnation.

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I do not send it forth as a work of art, and I have not studied to conform to the established laws of the species of composition to which it may seem to belong. It has the air of being a work of fiction; but it has been written in an earnest spirit for a serious purpose.

The form in which I have chosen to send out the ideas and discussions embodied in this work, has been adopted to please myself, and because it was the most convenient form I could adopt for presenting my ideas clearly and in a moderate space. A regular treatise

on the subject here discussed, I have not had the patience, if the ability, to prepare, and nobody would read it if I had.

It may be objected that I have introduced too much fiction for a serious work, and too little, if I intended a regular-built novel. All I have to say is the public must take the work as they find it. In order to have introduced a greater variety of characters and events, I wanted a fertility of imagination to which I lay no claim, and a different purpose in writing from the one I really had. I have introduced as much variety of character and action, as my imagination furnished, or my judgment approved. If novel readers are not satisfied with this explanation, why, they must apply to somebody else, I can give them no satisfaction.

The characters introduced are of course fictitious, yet I may say that I have myself had an intellectual experience similar to that which Mr. Elwood records, and what he has said of himself would perhaps apply in some degree to me. I am willing the public should take the book as an account which I have

thought proper to give of my own former unbelief and present belief. So far as it can be of any use, I am willing that what is here recorded should have the authority of my own experience.

Those who are acquainted with the philosophical writers of the modern eclectic school of philosophy in France, will perceive that Mr. Morton has anticipated many of their results, and perhaps given them an original application. He seems to be somewhat of a kindred spirit with M. Victor Cousin, though perhaps more of a theologian, and therefore more disposed to consider philosophy in its connexion with religion.

With these remarks I dismiss this little book to its fate. I have taken much pleasure in its composition; I have embodied in it the results of years of inquiry and reflection; and I have thought it not ill-adapted to the present state of the public mind in this community. It deals with the weightiest problems of philosophy and theology, and perhaps some minds may find it not altogether worthless.

Boston, February 15, 1840.

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INTRODUCTION.

You ask me, my dear K——, to give you the history of my life. I am flattered by the request which your often-tried friendship for me has prompted, but I can bring myself to comply with it only in part. Perhaps the history of my life would not be altogether barren of interest, but I have resolved that it shall never be written. I have lived in the world from my childhood; I have acted even a conspicuous part with the men of my generation, in its busy scenes; my name has been known far and wide; and yet are there none living who can bring together the scattered fragments of my story and furnish any tolerable account of my life. They who knew me in childhood are not they who have known me in the prime of manhood or in old age; and they who have known me at one period of my life, or under one relation, have had and can have no access to those who have known me at another period or under another relation.

But why ask for the story of my outward life? It can tell you little of myself, and furnish you no sure index to my real character. The man lies

beneath his deeds, far beneath the outward events of his life. Would you become acquainted with the man you must read the history of his soul — make yourself familiar with his spiritual experience, his inward struggles, defeats, victories, doubts, convictions, aims, ideals. These constitute the man, and you become acquainted with him only in proportion as you become acquainted with them. Moreover, arrived as I am at the last stage in my earthly pilgrimage, and wasting away under a disease which, though gentle in its operations, must ere long lay me asleep with my fathers, my past deeds shrink into insignificance, as does the world to which they belonged. I find now solace and support only in turning in upon myself, in retracing my inward experience, and ascertaining what I have garnered up in my soul, that I may be able to carry with me whither I am going. But even this experience has little value except for myself. It can stand others in no stead, or if it can, they may find all that is essential in it, by recurring to what has passed in themselves.

After all, my dear K——, what are individuals that their history should be written? Biography is the fruit of vanity, or of a false philosophy. What is purely individual, is of no value; it must needs pass away with the individual, and leave no trace; what there is in an individual, which belongs to the race, necessarily inscribes itself on his age, its institutions, laws, morals, or manners. The

memory of the good man lives in the virtue which went forth from him, — that of the great man in the results Humanity obtains from the victories he has helped her achieve. The man's biography, if he have manifested aught of the manly nature, has become an integral part of the life of humanity, and therefore needs not to be written in a book and laid up in the scholar's library. The book preserves nothing; for nothing ever dies that ought to live; nothing is ever forgotten that should be remembered; and all is known of every man that is worth knowing.

You see then, my dear K——, why I cannot comply with your request. If I have done aught for my race it will not be forgotten; if my fellow men are the wiser or the better for my having lived, I am immortal.

We should study to be men, heroes, and think not whether our names shall or shall not be remembered. Nevertheless, I understand the feeling which prompts us to inquire how it has been with those in this world whom we have loved, or whose memories we would cherish. I know the love which you feel for me, and which gives me an importance in your eyes which I have not in my own, makes you desirous of knowing what befell me during that long period of my life which passed away before we met; I know every incident in my eventful life, every the minutest fact in my experience, would be precious to you for my sake,

that you would prize it and preserve it; and to gratify you, and to show how deeply I value the love which has come to shed a glory around the winter of my life, I would willingly recall and relate all that I have been, have done, or have suffered. But I have not now the strength to do it. The time allotted me here is too limited; and my last moments should rather be employed in making what preparation I can for the new world into which I am so soon to enter. I have however by me a short account of a period of my life, least known to the public, which I drew up some years ago at the solicitation of one, now, alas, no more! It will tell you not much of my exterior relations, nor of the scenes in which I have taken an active part; but it may tell you somewhat of my inward conflicts, and perhaps disclose to you some of the causes which have made me what I am. When I drew it up, I had the folly to think that it might serve as a guide to those who should find themselves, as I did myself, at an early age, lost in that wilderness of Doubt, where a man cannot live, and from which there seems to be no issue; but I have lived long enough to learn that the experience which profits, is our own and not another's. I have looked it over and added a few notes which were needed to make some parts of it intelligible; I have revised some portions; but I have not been able to make it harmonize with the present temper of my mind. We are rarely in old age satisfied

with the performances of our youth. The imperfections I see in it, however, render it but a more faithful picture of my mind and character at the period to which it relates. I place it in your hands, and you may do with it as you please. As coming from me, and as concerning me, I doubt not that you will prize it. You will find nothing in it to make you love me less; and that is all I ask. Of the many whose hearts I have felt were my own, you alone remain. I will not say that any have been false, but all have left me, perhaps through my own fault. I have none who can talk with me over life's early trials, temptations, and struggles. With you I chanced to meet, only long after I had persuaded myself that friendship and love were not for such as I. You have taught me what all who reach old age know but too well, however otherwise youth may fear, that the heart never grows old, that the affections are always young. I cannot consent that you should leave me as others have left me. I would go down to the grave feeling that one warm heart loved me still, and had no cause to regret the wealth of affection it had lavished upon me.

C. E.

CHARLES ELWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

A VISITER.

I was surprised at my breakfast by a visit from Mr. Smith, the young clergyman I had heard preach the preceding evening. This was hardly in the ordinary course of things. I was generally regarded in the village as an infidel; and to be an infidel — that is, an open, avowed infidel — is to exclude one's self from the common courtesies of civilized life, and almost from the pale of humanity. Pious people beheld me with a most righteous horror, and not unfrequently, I have good reason to believe, made use of my name to restore quiet or preserve submission in the nursery. Of course I was generally avoided by the elect, probably lest I should cause them to become castaways.

The wisdom or the policy, to say nothing of the

justicé, of this manner of treating the infidel, is somewhat questionable, and in my own case was decidedly bad. I had a deep yearning for communion with my kind, and was ever ready to sympathize with them in their joy or their sorrow. I was unconscious of guilt; I had a strong craving to know the truth, and I felt that I had done my best to ascertain it, and that if I was in error I was not in fault. The conduct of religious people, therefore, struck me as unjust, and could not fail to prejudice me against them, and through them against religion itself. Had they treated me as a man, and shown me that respect for my honest convictions which I was willing to show them for theirs, I have no doubt that I should have been saved from dogmatic infidelity. But they were not wise enough — very likely not christian enough — for this.

I have since thought, however, that these religious people did respect me to a certain extent. We always consciously or unconsciously do homage to the man of true moral independence, who unflinchingly adheres to what he believes to be the truth. No man who is true to his own convictions, who follows faithfully his own conscience, and proclaims calmly but fearlessly unpopular doctrines, regardless of personal consequences, but does in reality gain the respect of the community in which he lives, however great may be its repugnance to the views he sets forth. Every body despises the

time-server, the moral coward, who wants the manliness to speak out his honest convictions, and who says "Good Lord," and "Good Devil," doubtful into the hands of which he may ultimately fall. But my religious friends had their religious character to maintain with one another, and no one among them had the moral courage to make the first advances. Every one felt that if he were intimate with me, all his brethren might suspect his orthodoxy, and perhaps accuse him of encouraging infidelity.

It is possible, also, that some did honestly fear that if they treated me as a man and a brother, they would be giving countenance to my heresies and encouraging me in errors which would prove not only dangerous to society, but fatal to my own soul. They felt it to be their duty to make me dissatisfied with my infidelity, and to do what they could to deprive me of all personal influence. This they supposed could be done most effectually by bringing the whole force of public opinion to bear against me. But in this, their zeal for religion outran their knowledge of human nature. Public opinion is the poorest argument in the world to convince a man of his errors. Every man, if there be any thing of the man about him, adheres but the firmer to his opinions the more unpopular they render him. We value those opinions the most for which we pay the dearest, and hold on as with a death-grasp to the faith, or the want of faith, for which we have been made outcasts from society.

But this is a truth religious people have been slow to learn, and learn it perfectly they cannot without just observation and profound reflection — two things which they eschew almost as devoutly as they do infidelity itself.

It may be easily inferred, from what I have said, that I was left pretty much alone, that my intercourse with my fellow men, was exceedingly restricted. My friends were few in number, and rarely such as I would have chosen. They who had reputation to gain or to lose, took good care not to be thought acquaintances of mine. And the friendship of those who called themselves my friends, grew cool in nearly the same proportion in which the warmth of the revival increased. One and only one, I had trusted, might remain firm, but him I had left on the anxious seats, and could therefore hardly hope to meet him again as a friend. Under these circumstances, a visit early in the morning from a clergyman, and such a clergyman as I supposed Mr. Smith to be, was an event in my life as unlooked for as it was apparently inexplicable.

But Mr. Smith, to do him justice, was in the main an honest, well-meaning man. Early drawn to the contemplation of religious subjects, and impressed with the importance of saving his soul, he had failed to take enlarged views of men and things, or to acquire much of that kind of knowledge which expands the affections and liberalizes

the mind. Educated too by charity, as a poor and pious youth, gratitude to the sect which had taken him up, and to which he had pledged his faith before he had begun his inquiries after the truth, had come to quicken his zeal and narrow his sympathies. But he was sincere, and really desirous of saving souls. He was fresh from the theological school, full of the ardor of undamped youth, and burning with all the zeal to make proselytes that could be inspired by a creed which denied the possibility of salvation to any who doubted it. He had heard of me as an atheist, his attention had been directed to me at his evening meeting, and he had now just stepped in to convert me to Christianity. Having never measured himself with an intelligent unbeliever, he counted on an easy and speedy victory.

CHAPTER II.

DIVINE REVELATION.

"I HAVE called on you, Mr. Elwood," said Mr. Smith, after a few common-place remarks, "with a message from God."

"Indeed!" said I: "And when, sir, did you receive it?"

"Last night. When you left the meeting without taking your place on the anxious seats, God told me to come and deliver you a message."

"Are you certain it was God?"

"I am."

"And how will you make me certain?"

"Do you think I would tell you a falsehood?"

"Perhaps not, intentionally; but what evidence have I that you are not yourself deceived?"

"I feel certain, and do I not know what I feel?"

"Doubtless, what you feel; but how do you know that your feeling is worthy of trust?"

"Could not God give me, when he spoke to me, sufficient evidence that it was really He who spoke to me?"

"Of that you are probably the best judge. But

admit that he could give it, and has actually given it; still you alone have it, not I. If then you come to me with the authority of God to vouch for the trustworthiness of your feeling, you must be aware that I have not that authority; I have only your word — the word of a man, who for aught I know, is as fallible as myself. You come to me as an ambassador from God; produce your credentials, and I will listen to your despatches."

"My credentials are the Bible."

"But, pray, sir, how can a book written many ages ago, by nobody knows whom, be a proof to me that God told you last night to come and deliver me a message this morning?"

"I bring you just such a message as the Bible dictates."

"And what then?"

"The Bible is the Word of God."

"That is easily said, but I fancy not quite so easily proved. The Bible is in the same category with your feeling of certainty, of which you have spoken. Certain men, it is said, in old times, had certain dreams, visions, inward impressions, which they called, or somebody in their name, the Word of God. That they had the dreams, visions, inward impressions, is possible, but how could they know that they came from God?"

"Their impressions bore the mark of God's seal. The men who received them were honest men, holy men, who could have no motive to deceive

others, and who could not be deceived themselves."

"And how know you all that?"

"I am sure of it."

"I am glad you are. But I should hardly dare make so broad an assertion concerning individuals with whom I am intimately acquainted, much less of individuals of whom I know nothing at all, not even the time when they lived, the nation to which they belonged, the language in which they wrote, nor even the names which they bore. How know I that the Bible-writers were honest men? What do I, or can I know of their motives? Before you insist on my relying upon a man's testimony, it would seem no more than fair that you should make me acquainted with him; that you should tell me his name, his place of residence, the nation to which he belongs; and in case of an ancient writer, that you should tell me when he wrote, in what language; — in a word, you should give me his whole character, and the entire history of his life. This I suspect you are not able to do, in the instance of a single one of your Bible-writers."

"You misstate the case. The historical evidence is complete; at least, it is much stronger in proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the several books of the Bible than it is of any other ancient writing whatever."

"I am speaking, sir, of the character and mo-

tives of the Bible-writers, of which, so far as I have been able to ascertain, we know next to nothing at all. But admit that we know as much of these writers as we do of any other ancient writers, how does that help the matter? Because I know nothing of one class of writers, does it follow that I have no need of knowing anything of another class? Besides, the cases are not parallel. The facts and doctrines of the Bible are to be taken on the personal authority of its writers. If I cannot prove these writers worthy of implicit confidence, I can offer no good reason for believing the facts they relate, or the doctrines they teach. But it is different with what are called profane writers. We have their books, and these speak for themselves. Their worth would be but slightly impaired were their authors wholly unknown. The works ascribed to Homer, to Plato, Cicero, Virgil and Horace, would be precisely what they are and have exactly the same authority they now have, had they been written by any other individuals than those to whom they are attributed. This is because the truth or falsity of their subject-matter does in nowise depend on the personal authority of their authors. But with the Bible it is not so. You do not allow me to take the Bible as I do one of the works of Homer or Cicero, and judge for myself of its contents. You do not allow me the liberty to be my own judge of what is true or false in the Bible; but you require me to take the whole

of it as true, and not only as true but as the measure and test of truth; and this, too, not because I have by the exercise of my own reason found it to be true, but on the bare word of its authors. This makes an essential difference, and requires you to furnish me with as much stronger proof in the case of the Bible-writers than is necessary in the case of profane writers, as the implicit faith you demand in the statements of the first surpasses the assent which I yield to the statements of the last. But waiving this, and much more to the same purpose, admitting that you can come to some tolerable conclusions concerning the characters and motives of the alleged authors of the Bible, how will you ascertain the purity and genuineness of the writings which have come down to us in their name?"

"That has been done over and over again, by some of the ablest, the most learned, and pious men that ever lived."

"So I have heard it said, but so have I not seen it proved. I have looked over most of your celebrated apologies for the Bible and Christianity, but with little other emotion than astonishment at the much which is asserted, and the little which is proved. All these celebrated apologies seem to me to proceed on the supposition that the Bible was written in an enlightened age, and published and extensively, I may almost say, universally circulated and read in a nation of critics, all of

whom were interested in detecting its errors, and would most certainly have detected and exposed them had there been any. Now, sir, I need not tell you, a theologian, that such is not the fact. They were produced in a semi-barbarous age, or among a half-civilized people. They were never published, as we understand the term. They were never open to criticism, as books are now-a-days; partly because at first they were considered too insignificant to be refuted, but mainly because they were, by the people who submitted to them, regarded as sacred books. They were accounted sacred books, not because their superior worth was seen and felt, but because they were the productions of the sacerdocy, or such books as the Jewish or Christian priesthood approved, and authorized to be read. All books written or approved by the sacerdotal caste, were always accounted sacred, holy, in opposition to profane books, or books written or kept not in the *fane* or temple. Being sacred books it was never lawful to criticise them, and they never were criticised when the priesthood had power to prevent it. And you, sir, are well aware, that whenever the priesthood has attained to power it has always taken good care to destroy the criticisms which it had not been able to prevent. Moreover, the books have always been in the keeping of the priesthood, and of a priesthood too which obtained its living, rank, and consideration from expounding them to a laity which had

them not, and could not have read them, if it had had them. I own, sir, that I have a distrust of all books which have come to us through the hands of the priesthood, of whom it is no lack of charity to say, that in no age or country have they proved themselves too virtuous to interpolate, alter, or fabricate any work when required by the interests of their order."

"That is a statement you cannot sustain. The very fact that the sacred books have always been in the keeping of the Jewish priesthood and the Christian clergy, is a sure guaranty of their genuineness and purity."

"Your assertion, it strikes me, betrays rather a superficial acquaintance with priesthoods in general, and the Jewish and Christian priesthoods in particular; or else that you have studied them with the partialities of a friend who deems it the greatest merit to be blind to a friend's faults. But I am not disposed to insist on this. I will merely add that once open the door to the admission of such testimony as you seem to judge unexceptionable, once lay it down as a principle of evidence that a man's word, if he have but a tolerable character for honesty and truth, is sufficient proof of any statement he may make, whatever be its subject-matter, and I see not what end you will have to impostors and impositions. Any one who can conceal a nefarious design beneath the cloak of external sanctity, may proclaim himself divinely

inspired, command whatever he pleases; and denounce you in the name of God, if you refuse him obedience. You must own him as a prophet of the Lord, and accept his prophecies, be they what they may. The past and the present have a thousand voices to condemn in advance the principle of evidence you would establish. I would not treat you, sir, with disrespect, but knowing as I do from past history and from my own experience, how easy it is for a man to be deceived, I must believe that it is more likely that your zeal has betrayed you, than it is that God has given you a special message to me."

CHAPTER III.

MIRACLES.

"But you forget," replied Mr. Smith, after a short pause, "that the communications received by the sacred writers bore the impress of God's seal. God gave them all needed assurance that it was he himself who spoke to them. If then they were honest men, we ought to believe them. That they were honest men, worthy of all credit as speaking by Divine authority, I infer from the fact that they could work miracles."

"All that is easily said. Whether God keeps a seal or not is more than I know; but supposing he does, are mortals well enough acquainted with it to recognise it the moment it is presented? How do they know its impress? Has God lodged with them a fac-simile of it?"

"God told them that it was his seal."

"But how did they know it was God who said so? Had they had any previous acquaintance with him? Who introduced him to them, assured them it was verily the Almighty? But this leads us back to where we were a moment ago. I sup-

pose you hold a supernatural revelation from God to be necessary ? "

" Certainly."

" And without a supernatural revelation we can know nothing of God ? "

" Nothing."

" Deprive us of the Bible and we should be in total ignorance of God ? "

" Assuredly."

" It is necessary to prove that the revelation said to be from God is actually from him ? "

" Undoubtedly."

" The revelation is proved to be from God by the miracles performed by the men who professed to speak by Divine authority ? "

" Yes."

" Miracles prove this, because they are performed by the power of God, and because God will not confer the power of working miracles on wicked men or men who will tell lies ? "

" So I believe."

" It requires some knowledge of God to be able to say of any given act that it is performed by God. We say of what you term a miracle, that it is wrought by the Almighty, because we seem to ourselves to detect his presence in it. Now if we were totally unacquainted with his presence, should we be able to detect it ? It therefore requires some knowledge of God to be able to assert that what is termed a miracle is actually effected by

Divine power. Also it requires some knowledge of God to be able to affirm that he will give the power of working miracles to good men only. You start at the idea that he would give this power to wicked men, because to do so would be inconsistent with the character you believe him to possess. In saying that he will not do it, you assume to be acquainted with his character; and from your assumed acquaintance with his character, you infer what he will or will not do. In both of these instances, no inconsiderable knowledge of God is presupposed. Whence do we obtain this knowledge?"

"Every body knows enough of God to know when a miracle is performed that it is God who performs it, and to know that God will not give the power of working miracles to bad men."

"Perhaps so. You at least may know enough to know this. But suppose you were deprived of all the light of revelation, would you know enough of God to know this? Did I not understand you to say that were it not for revelation we should be totally ignorant of God?"

"I said so, and say so still."

"I presume, sir, that there is a point here which has in part escaped your attention. I have observed that you religious people, in defending miracles, assume to be in possession of all the knowledge of God communicated by the supernatural revelation miracles are brought forward to authenticate. You

assume the truth of the revelation, and by that verify your miracles; and then adduce your miracles to authenticate the revelation. But I need not say to you that before you have authenticated your revelation you have no right to use it; and before you can authenticate it, on your own showing, you must verify your miracles — a thing you cannot do without that knowledge of God which you say is to be obtained from the revelation only."

"I do no such thing."

"Not intentionally, consciously, I admit. You have not a doubt of the truth of revelation. Your whole intellectual being is penetrated in all directions with its teachings, and you never make in your own mind an abstraction of what you have received from the Bible, and thus ascertain what would be your precise condition were you left to the light of nature. You fall therefore unconsciously into the practice of reasoning in support of your faith from premises which that faith itself supplies, and which would be of no validity if that faith were proved to be false; and are of no validity when reasoning with one who questions it. But, sir, this whole matter of miracles may be cut short. What is a miracle? You must know as much of God and the universe to be able to define a miracle, as a miracle on any supposition can teach you. Therefore miracles are at best useless. Then the evidence of the extraordinary feats you term miracles is not altogether satisfactory. All ancient

history, profane as well as sacred, is full of marvellous stories which no sound mind can for one moment entertain. They serve to discredit history. The ancient historian who should fill his history with marvels would by no means be held in so high respect even by yourself as one who confined his faith to the simple, the ordinary, the natural. His faith in marvels, omens, oracles, prodigies, you would regard as an impeachment of his judgment. Why not do the same in regard to the Bible historians? You allege miracles as a proof of revelation, when in fact nothing about your revelation, or in it, is more in need of proof than your miracles themselves. Then again, miracles can prove nothing but our ignorance. No event that can be traced to a known cause is ever termed a miracle. A miracle is merely an event which can be traced to no known law of nature. To say an event is miraculous, is merely saying that it is an anomaly in our experience, and not provided for in our systems of science. The miraculous events recorded in the Bible may have occurred, for aught I know, but they are of no value as evidences of Christianity."

"Why not?"

"I supposed I had already shown why not. You cannot know enough of God and the universe to know, in the first place, that what you term miracles are actually wrought by God. For aught you know to the contrary there may be thousands of

beings superior to man capable of performing them. And in the second place, you can never infer from the fact that a man opens the eyes of the blind, or restores a dead body to life, that he cannot tell a lie. The fact that the miracle is performed does not necessarily involve the truth of the doctrine taught, nor the veracity of the miracle-worker. So far as you or I know a man may perform what is termed a miracle and yet be a teacher of false doctrines."

"But if you should see a man raise a dead body to life, in attestation of his Divine commission, would you not believe him?"

"If your history be correct, there were men who actually saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, and yet neither recognised his claims as the Son of God nor as a teacher of truth, but went away and took counsel how they might put him to death. Before the raising of a man from the dead could be a sufficient warrant for me to receive any doctrine, I must know positively that no being not commissioned by God, can raise a dead body to life, or that no being capable of raising a dead body to life, can possibly tell a falsehood. Now this knowledge I have not, and cannot have."

Mr. Smith made no reply. He remarked that he had overstaid his time, that an imperious engagement required him to leave me; but he would call upon me again, and continue the discussion — a promise, by-the-by, which he forgot to keep, or

which circumstances prevented him from fulfilling.

Many years have elapsed since this conversation took place. I have reviewed it often in various and diverse moods of mind, but I have not been able to detect any fallacy in my reasoning. It is true that reasoning, if admitted, goes to show that a revelation from God to man is impossible. If the premises from which both Mr. Smith and I started be correct, all supernatural revelation must be given up. *They who deny to man all inherent capacity to know God, all immediate perception of spiritual truth, place man out of the condition of ever knowing any thing of God.* Man can know only what he has a capacity to know. God may speak to him, and utter truths which he could not of himself have found out, but unless there be in him something which recognises the voice of God, and bears witness for God, it is all in vain. If there be not this something in man, then can man receive no revelation from God. There must be a God within to recognise and vouch for the God who speaks to us from without.

Now this inherent capacity to recognise God, this power to detect his presence wherever he is, and of course everywhere, I did not admit, and not admitting this my conclusions followed legitimately from my premises.

Mr. Smith admitted it no more than I did, and

therefore could not refute me. Denying this capacity, he admitted nothing by which a supernatural revelation could be authenticated, for it required this capacity to detect the presence of God in the miracles, not less than to detect it in the revelation itself. Not having this capacity, man could have no standard by which to try the revelation alleged to be from God. This was what I labored to make Mr. Smith comprehend; I demanded of him this standard, the criterion of spiritual truth, the fac-simile of God's seal with which to compare the impress on the despatches sent us in his name; but he could not answer my demand.

Many able apologists of Christianity fail to perceive the point they must establish in the very outset of this controversy with unbelievers. This point is, that man is endowed with an intelligence that knows God immediately, by intuition. They who deny this, may be religious, but only at the expense of their logic. We can rationally and scientifically sustain religion only by recognising the mystic element of human nature, an element, which though in man, is yet in relation with God, and serves as the mediator between God and man. If we cannot establish the reality of this element, which is sometimes termed the Divine in man, and which though in nature is supernatural, it is in vain to seek for any scientific basis for theology, and unbelief in God is the only conclusion to which we can legitimately come.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTERVIEW.

After Mr. Smith had taken his leave, I called on my friend George Wyman, whom I had left the preceding evening on the anxious seats. He was not at home, but instead of him I found his sister Elizabeth. Of this sister, I must say something, and yet I would not; her name calls up much I would forget, as well as much I would remember; but little that I am willing to relate. The heart has secrets which it is sacrilege to reveal. Elizabeth and I had been acquainted for some time, and we had formed a strong mutual attachment; we had opened the state of our hearts to each other, and were now waiting for a few weeks to pass away, to be declared in due form "husband and wife."

"O, Charles, I am so glad to see you," exclaimed she, rising to meet me, as I entered the room. "O there *is* a God! He has spoken peace to my soul, and I wanted to see you that we might sing his praise together."

"O, there is a God," spoken by the sweet lips of eighteen, by her we love and hope in a few days to call our own by the most intimate and sacred of ties,—it goes well nigh to melt even the atheist. It comes to us as a voice from another world, and wins the heart though it fail to convince the understanding. It is no easy thing to be an atheist when one loves, is in presence of the one he loves, and hears her, in the simple, confiding tones of the child, exclaim, "O, there is a God." For a moment I gazed on the beautiful being before me, as upon one inspired. Could I see her, hear her, love her with all my heart, and not believe in the Divinity? She seemed sent to me from a fairer world, to bear witness to the reality of brighter beings than the dull inhabitants of earth.

I ought to explain the occasion of this exclamation on the part of Elizabeth, and I have done it, when I have said that she had been recently converted, and this was our first meeting since. Her manner affected me not a little, and, strange as it may seem, went much farther than all Mr. Smith's logic towards making me a Christian. But recovering myself, and making an effort to reply calmly, I replied, as is not uncommon in such cases, even coldly.

"I perceive, Elizabeth, that you have become a subject of the Revival," said I. "Women are easily affected in revival seasons. They are creatures of sentiment rather than of reason, and are

therefore much addicted to piety. That may all be well enough. God, you say, has spoken peace to your soul. Very well. He has not spoken to me."

"Charles, Charles, have you no feeling? The whole creation is radiant with God's glory: all creatures, even beasts, birds and insects, join in a hymn of praise to his mercy; and are you silent, you, whom I have heard so often and so eloquently plead for the oppressed, and so warmly vindicate the rights and dignity of man? Have you no word for God; the exhaustless source of all Goodness, Life and Love? Is your heart cold and dead?"

"No, Elizabeth, no. My heart is not dead. I want not sensibility, but I want faith. I see all things with the eyes of the unbeliever. I hear not the hymn which so enraptures you. All nature is silent to me. I cannot sympathize with your present feelings. I am an unbeliever, but I do not ask you to be one. Indulge your piety, but think not unkindly of me if I cannot share it."

"Charles, you might be a believer if you would."

"No, I could not. I am not an unbeliever from choice, but necessity."

"I doubt it. You are too proud to be a Christian. You are ashamed of the humility of the cross. You would be a philosopher, and follow your own reason. You will not submit to God."

"Nay, Elizabeth, you wrong me, wrong me

grievously. I am not ashamed of the humility of the cross. I have tried hard to be a Christian."

"You have?"

"Ay, by day and by night. I have sought God with my whole heart, with tears, entreaties, fastings, watchings, but it has availed me nothing; I am an atheist."

"O, say not so."

"Why should I deceive myself or others? If I know the state of my own mind, I do not believe in the existence of God. But do not fancy that I have become what I am without a struggle. I am not ignorant of what men call religion. It has been the study of my life. My first lesson was the catechism, and my earliest delight was in reading religious books, conversing with religious people, and thinking of God and heaven. I was not yet thirteen when I was affected as you have been,—had deep and pungent conviction for sin,—heard, as I fancied, the Son of God declare my sins forgiven, and felt all the ecstatic joy you now feel."

"And yet have become an unbeliever!"

"'T is true. But I have not labored to make others unbelievers. Unbelief has few attractions. It adds no glory to the universe, no warmth to the heart, no freshness to life. It is a sad creed; the wise endure it, but none love it."

"Why then cling to it? Why live without God in the world? Why not believe, and be filled with joy and peace unspeakable?"

"Because it depends not on us what we shall believe or disbelieve; because our belief or disbelief alters not the fact. Truth and falsehood depend not on us. We have not made the world. We must take it as we find it. No wise man values it very highly. It is full of cares and vexations, crosses and disappointments, trials and sorrows. The only course which wisdom leaves us is to make the most of the few fair days allotted us, to recline on the few sunny spots which may lie in life's pathway, endure without a murmur the evils we cannot cure, and welcome the end of our journey when we may lie down in the grave, 'Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'"

"So young, and yet so gloomy! So soon is the light of hope extinguished, your affections blighted, and your soul darkened! O, Charles, see the fruits of your boasted philosophy. Let me pray you to rekindle the light of hope at religion's torch, and your heart shall resume its early freshness. Your path shall be bright again, and you may walk through life praising God, and loving all his works; and when our journey is ended we will not lie down in the cold grave, but uprise in a fairer and better world, where we shall re-youth ourselves, and enter into joys which 'eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.'"

"It is a brave dream. It were pleasant to re-

cline in the bowers of Elysium, to ramble over its green fields, and gather its wild flowers. It were pleasant, after having been so long tost and torn on the stormy voyage of life, to find at last a secure haven in which our shattered bark may be refitted, and prepared to ride the ocean again in pride and safety. It may be that there is that haven. It may be that those green fields await us, and that we shall ramble over them together, and enjoy their beauty. It may be that we shall recline in those bowers and recount all that we thought, hoped, joyed, or sorrowed, amidst the trials and strug-gles, successes and defeats of our earthly pilgrim-age. It is a blissful dream. I may sometimes wish to awake and find it a reality. Dream on then, dearest Elizabeth. I will not awake you. Who knows but your dreams may turn out to be truer than my waking wisdom? No: I will be no cloud over the sunlight of your soul. If there be a God, perhaps he may one day reveal himself to me also, and I may hope as well as you."

CHAPTER V.

THE INQUIRY MEETING.

ELIZABETH took my last remarks for more than they were worth, and imagined me much nearer the kingdom of heaven than I really was. She was far from foreseeing the long and severe battle I had yet to fight with doubt and unbelief. She therefore requested me to accompany her to an inquiry meeting, and unwilling to grieve her by a refusal, I consented, and we departed.

Inquiry meetings were not, as the name would seem to indicate, meetings for the investigation of any points of doctrine or practice; but simply for the purpose of ascertaining the state of the souls of such as were seeking or had recently "obtained a hope." They were, at the time of which I speak, very frequent, and held among the most efficient means of pulling down the kingdom of Satan and building up that of God's dear Son. They are, if I am rightly informed, less frequent now, and held in altogether less repute. Whether this be owing to the fact, that other and more efficient means for converting the soul have been

found out, or that men care less about the soul's salvation than they did, I am unable to say. I should, however, be sorry to believe that any part of the revival machinery formerly so much in use had been abandoned through indifference to religion, or to the welfare of man either for time or eternity.

There was unquestionably much in the revival measures which no enlightened friend of religion can approve, but I have been prone of late to question the perfect wisdom of those who condemned them indiscriminately. The religious world had become all but dead, the church had lost nearly all sense of its mission, and men's indifference to their duties both as religious beings and as social, had become frightful. This world engrossed all minds and hearts, and the whole community seemed lost to all worship but that of Mammon. Something was necessary to awaken the slumbering conscience, to rescue men from the all-absorbing selfishness and worldly-mindedness which had become so universal; to make them conscious of their higher and better nature; to make them feel that they were created for a nobler end than that of amassing an estate, continuing the race, and rotting in the grave. Some few there were who felt this. They saw the gross wickedness and sensuality of the times; they roused themselves and set themselves at work to effect a reform. Their zeal was far from being

always according to knowledge; their efforts from resulting in the production of unmixed good; but they succeeded in shaking the dry bones, in reviving a good work, in preparing, — unless I am greatly mistaken, — a more advanced state of the church and of society. Though once one of their most violent and indefatigable opponents, I have long since regarded them with a friendly eye. They undoubtedly engendered much fanaticism, much bigotry and sectarian animosity; but these, after all, disastrous as they may be, are less to be deprecated, than the selfishness and indifference they aimed to remove.

On our arrival at the place of meeting, we were separated, — Elizabeth, as having found religion, was conducted to the saints' apartment, and I, as being at best nothing more than a seeker, was ushered into the room occupied by the sinners. This was a large room in a private dwelling, much crowded — as sinners' apartments always are. It presented to my eye, on entering, a varied and even a touching aspect. In it, as in the tomb, were brought together the representatives of both sexes, all ages and all conditions. Here was the old man of threescore and ten, with whitened head palsied arm, and broken frame, bewailing a misspent life, and trembling with fearful apprehension of a judgment to come. By his side was the boy with chubby face and flaxen locks, his bright blue eyes swollen with weeping for sins he

had not yet learned even by name. A little further on was a middle aged man, his strong athletic frame writhing and contorting under a guilty conscience. I turned with horror from his countenance, which bore witness that the fires of hell were doing their strange work within. My eyes rested a moment on a conspicuous seat, where sat the village trader, and the village lawyer, trying in vain to look sad and penitent. Not for their sins were they there. They were there, the one because he wanted more customers and better bargains, the other because he wanted more fees and more votes. I set them down as incorrigible, and turned towards a distant corner of the room to observe the subdued mien of a young maiden, I had known as the gayest among the gay, and the loveliest among the lovely. Yet she was pure and fit for heaven. She was there to find, not forgiveness for sins, but a soothing balm for a heart which a false wretch had betrayed and broken. But a truce with description.

I was allowed but a moment to look around and collect myself, after I had taken a seat to which some one had motioned me, before I was accosted by Mr. Wilson, the clergyman in whose parish the Revival had at first broken out. Mr. Wilson and myself were but barely known to each other. He was one of those men from whom I have through life instinctively recoiled. He was about forty-five years of age, well made, a commanding figure,

and of gentlemanly and to most people an engaging person and address. He had been originally a lawyer, but had some time since abandoned the bar for the pulpit. He had seen much of the world, — was familiar with men, acquainted with human nature — on its dark side — and had of course a sovereign contempt of man and his capabilities. His intellectual powers were respectable, his religious feelings strong and active, and his moral sentiments weak and sluggish. He would never enter a church without taking off his hat, but he could pass a poor widow without thinking of her wants; he would do much for evangelizing the world and converting it to his creed, but very little for civilizing it, and making the earth the abode of love and peace. But whatever he was, he contrived to throw a veil of sanctity over the unseemly features of his character, and to pass himself off with the multitude as a saint of the first water.

"Mr. Elwood," said he, in a low and respectful tone, "I am glad to see you here. Religion is worthy of the homage of the mind in its dawn, and in its noonday glory. It is truly refreshing to the friends of Jesus, to see young men of talents and education coming forward to inquire the way to Zion. Have you long been concerned for the salvation of your soul?"

"No, sir," I replied. "But I have thought long and anxiously on the subject of religion."

"He who has done that, will not long remain indifferent to his soul's salvation."

"Perhaps not, in general; but for myself, I care little about my soul or anything else that belongs to me. I am not worth caring for. But I would know if I ought to regard this miserable life as the term of man's existence,—if there be indeed a God who holds the destinies of the universe, and to whom vice and virtue are not indifferent."

"I fear, my dear sir, that you have indulged in some unprofitable, not to say presumptuous speculations. We must not strive to be wise above what is written. The world is full of mysteries and we cannot hope to unravel them all. We should seek to believe rather than to comprehend."

"I am not so vain as to hope to clear up all mysteries; but I must know what and wherefore I believe,—what and wherefore I worship. Even your master reproves those who worship they 'know not what,' and I must have a reason for the faith I avow."

"Take care that you do not rely too much on reason. Reason is a feeble and a false light, that dazzles but to blind. We should submit our reason to the word of God."

"Be my reason feeble and false as it may, it is my only light, and should I extinguish that I should be in total darkness. It is reason that distinguishes me from the brutes, and till I am willing to become a brute, I must insist on using it."

"Certainly, my dear sir. Use your reason, but bear in mind that it is reason's highest glory to listen to the voice of God. But I perceive that you are laboring under difficulties which this is neither the time nor the place to discuss. Do me the favor to call at my house tomorrow at ten o'clock, and I will try and relieve your mind of its embarrassments."

So saying, he turned away to address himself to his several subjects according to their several conditions. To one he whispered hope; in this ear he breathed consolation; in that he thundered rebuke and the startling terrors of the law. I remained till the meeting broke up, accompanied Elizabeth to her home almost in silence, and hurried to my own lodgings to meditate on the occurrences of the day, and the various topics which had come up. My mind was in no enviable state. Love, doubt, desire to believe, and inability to believe, operating each by turns and all together, made me anything but comfortable. I looked forward with some eagerness to the proposed interview with Mr. Wilson, but with little hope, it must be confessed, of any satisfactory result.

CHAPTER VI.

STRUGGLES.

We do not pass from belief to doubt, nor from doubt to disbelief without a long and severe struggle. Even after we have become confirmed unbelievers, there are many remembrances which rise up to make us weep that we are not what we were. In most cases, religion has been inwoven with all our earlier life. It has hallowed all the affections and associations which gather round the home of our childhood. Each spot, each object, each event dear to the memory, has its tale of religion. The sister who played with us, smiled when we were pleased, wept when we were grieved, — above all the mother who stood between us and danger, and knelt with us in prayer, speak to us of religion, and endear it to our hearts. Whenever we break away from it, we seem to ourselves to be breaking away from the whole past, — from all that we have loved, have hoped, feared, thought, enjoyed or suffered, and to be rushing upon a new and untried existence. It is a fearful change which then comes

over us. To be no longer what we have been, to lose sight of all that has been familiar to us, to enter upon we know not what, upon a state of being the issues of which we see not, and of which we can foretell nothing, — what is this different in reality from that event which men call death?

Over every one who once doubts the creed in which he has been reared, does this change come. The doubt once raised, the man has undergone a radical change. He can never be again what he has been. The simple faith of his childhood never returns. He may attain to conviction, but the childlike confidence, the warm trustfulness is gone forever. From that time henceforth, he must battle his way in the dark, with doubts, perplexities, insolvable problems as best he may. And to all this, of which we have at first a forefeeling, think not, that we bring ourselves to consent without a struggle.

Religion is life's poesy. It breathes a living soul into the universe, and gives us everywhere a bright and loving spirit with which to hold sweet and mystic communings. On every object around us it sheds a mellow light, and throws a veil over all the stern and forbidding features of reality. Bitter is the day which raises that veil, and bids that mellowing light be withdrawn; when for the first time we look into the heavens, and see no spirit shining there, over the rich and flowering earth and see no spirit blooming there, abroad

over a world of silent, senseless matter, and feel that we are — alone. I shall never forget that day; and I have no doubt that I shall see all the objects of sense, one after another, fade away and lose themselves in the darkness of death, with far less shrinking of soul, than I saw my childhood's faith depart, and felt the terrible conviction fastening itself upon me that all must go, — God, Christ, Immortality, that which my fathers had believed, for which they had toiled, lived, suffered, died, which my mother had cherished and infused into my being with the milk from her breast, — all, all, even to the last and dearest article must vanish and be to me henceforth but as a dream which cannot be recalled.

The world may not give me credit for feeling so much, for the world may have misconceived my real character. It has allowed me the stronger, the harsher, but denied me the softer and more amiable qualities of our nature. It has supposed me incapable of generous sympathies and firm attachments. But the world has not known me: at least as I should have been, had it not been for the unfriendly circumstances of my earlier life which forced into notice much which in ordinary cases is concealed, and gave a disproportionate development to qualities, of which nature gave me indeed the germ, but which she never intended should form the prominent traits of my character. My youth was one of hardship, privation and suf-

fering. My life has been a continual warfare with principles and doctrines which I have found in power, but which have appeared to me false and mischievous. I have almost always stood alone, battling single-handed for the unpopular cause, the unfashionable party, the heretical truth. My hand has been against every man, and every man's hand has been against me. Yet have I ever yearned towards my race, and separated from them only with the keenest regret. I have ever been found on the side of the future, the first to seek out and recognise the sheep-skin and goat-skin-clad prophets of God; and yet have I ever stood in awe before the weird Past, and beheld with reverence all that over which the stream of ages has rolled, over which has ebbed and flowed the tide of human life through many generations.

We know little of what passes in the hearts of our most intimate friends, what concealed wells of deep feeling, and holy sentiment, and gushing sympathy there are in those even who appear to us careless, cold and superficial. We all wear masks to one another, and it is not in our power to unmask ourselves even if we would. We are all better than our best friends believe us. Could we but lay open our hearts to one another, and be seen by each other as we really are, hatred would cease, contempt of man by man would find no place, brother would bring no railing accusation against brother, unholy strife would end, discord die away,

and love, joy and peace would reign. O, we know not what treasures of rich and holy feeling our ignorance of each other's better nature leads us to throw away, or to trample under our feet. He had a deep insight into human nature who made it the law of his morality that we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

I know that in all this I shall but excite a smile in the men of the world, who fancy that to sneer at human nature, and to distrust the capacities of the human soul, is a mark of superior wisdom, and especially in those who deem abhorrence of the infidel the most grateful incense to God; but I can assure these men of the world that I too have lived in the world, and have studied men not less than I have man; and can speak from experience as well as they. They may laugh at what they may please to call my folly, but for myself, I can bear to be laughed at without losing my temper, and I am able in most cases to find something to commend, to love and reverence, even in those who deride me. They are better than they think themselves.

Religion I had loved from my infancy. In my loneliness, in my solitary wanderings, it had been my companion and my support. It had been my pleasure to feel that wherever I went the eye of my Father watched over me, and his infinite love embraced me. I was never in reality alone. A glorious Presence went always with me. When I was thrown upon the world at a tender age without

a friend, and left to buffet my way unaided, unencouraged, and felt myself cut off from all communion with my kind, I could hold sweet and mysterious communion with the Father of men; and when I smarted under a sense of wrong done me, I could find relief in believing that God sympathized with me, and made my cause his own. God had been to me a reality, and though I had been nurtured in the tenets of the gloomiest and most chilling of Christian creeds, I had always seen him as a father, and as a father whose face ever beamed with paternal love. I could not then lose my faith, and see all my religious hopes and consolations escape in the darkness of unbelief, without feeling that I was giving up all that had hitherto sustained me, all that it was pleasant to remember, that could soothe in sorrow, strengthen under trial, inspire love, and give the wish or the courage to live.

CHAPTER VII.

AUTHORITY.

I CALLED on Mr. Wilson at the hour appointed. I found him alone in his Library looking over the *Systême de la Nature*. "I was trying to ascertain," he remarked, after the usual salutations, "what it is atheists find to allege against the existence of God. But here is merely the blind rage of an old man against an authority that should have sent him to the Bastille."

"But you would not," I interrupted, "rely on such arguments as are drawn from the Bastille, I presume?"

"No. Such arguments no longer comport with the spirit of the age. But I do wish men to feel that there is an authority to which they are accountable for their opinions not less than for their actions."

"Men are doubtless accountable to the truth for the opinions they entertain; but not, I take it, to one another."

"I allow no *man* to dictate to me what I shall

believe or disbelieve ; but I own that I feel myself bound to believe what God commands, and that I am guilty of rebellion if I do not."

"Not unless what he commands be true ? "

"His commands are the highest conceivable evidence of truth."

"I do not perceive that."

"God is the God of truth, and what he commands to be believed must needs therefore be true."

"If he commands me to commit murder, am I to believe that murder is right ? "

"Whatever he commands is right."

"Right because he commands it ; or does he command it because it is right ? "

"It is right because he commands it."

"Does the command make the right, or only evidence it ? "

"Makes it."

"Whatever is commanded then must be right."

"Whatever is commanded by God."

"Why what is commanded by him rather than by some other being ? "

"Because he is absolute sovereign, and an absolute sovereign has the right to command what he pleases, and what he has the right to command it cannot in the nature of things be wrong for us to do."

"But in what does God's sovereignty consist, in his power or in his justice ? "

"It consists in the fact that he is God."

"But is not justice essential to sovereignty?"

"We say so, in regard to earthly sovereigns, because their sovereignty is not absolute, but derived. God is an absolute sovereign, and is therefore the supreme, the highest, the ultimate. You cannot therefore conceive him bound to conform to justice or right, or something above him, unless you can conceive of something higher than the Highest, more ultimate than the Ultimate itself."

"You hold yourself then always bound to do the will of God."

"Most certainly."

"The will of God, you hold, makes the right?"

"Yes."

"Then you deny that right is something eternal, and of course all necessary distinctions between right and wrong."

"Not at all. Perhaps in strictness I should say, God does not make the right in itself, for he is it. The highest conception we can form of right, for us human beings, is conformity to the will of God. And this is right for us, because God is absolute and eternal and immutable right, and what he wills is willed by right."

"But if your God had chanced to have possessed the character you Christians ascribe to the Devil, then right would have been what is now wrong, and what is now termed devilish would have been termed godly."

"As to that I know nothing. God is, what he is; and being what he is, right is what it is. If the highest could have been different from what it is, and have issued different commands from what it now does, no doubt right, good and evil, just and unjust would have been different from what they now are. But what of that? If there had been nothing, nothing would have been. The Divine Being is what he is, not from an external necessity, but an eternal and invincible indwelling necessity."

"Well, be it so. But admitting his commands are obligatory upon us, that we are bound to believe what he has commanded, I suppose you allow me the free exercise of my reason in judging whether what is alleged to be his command, be in reality his command, and also in ascertaining its purport?"

"Hardly. Reason before the Fall might have been competent to judge of these matters; but is not now unless it have been regenerated by the Holy Ghost."

"Then you prohibit the exercise of reason?"

"Not at all. Reason is the power or faculty of deducing from certain data certain conclusions. When limited to the work of deduction, I approve it. But when it aspires to fix its premises, determine the data from which it should draw its inferences, it leaves its province, attempts what must ever exceed its powers, and should of course be rebuked."

"I thank you for your definition of reason. It is simply the power of drawing inferences. But aside from reason in this sense, you recognise in man, I presume, a power of perceiving, taking cognizance of the premises or data from which the reason makes its deduction?"

"No power or faculty capable of recognising God, or divine things; at least not till after regeneration."

"But if we have no faculty by which we can take cognizance of the data, and even judge whether they are well grounded or not, what confidence can we place in the deductions of reason?"

"None, except when we have the authority of God for our data. It is only when we reason from the revealed word of God, that we can rely with any certainty on reason."

"But, suppose I chance to doubt that what you call the revealed word of God is his word, how am I to satisfy myself that it is his word? If reason cannot determine that question, it must always work with uncertain premises, and never give us any thing more than skepticism. But it is idle to discuss this question. If our reason is below it, it is above us, and therefore not for us. If the alleged word of God be above my reason, it can be of no use to me. That, which I cannot comprehend, which I cannot ascertain to be true, is for me as though it were not. A Revelation is no revelation at all, if I cannot comprehend its

purport, and know that it is from God. But if I have no power or faculty by which I can attain to the cognition of Divine things, no divine revelation can be made to me."

"You can attain to the cognition of Divine things when you shall have been regenerated, not before."

"I will wait till then. For, if I cannot understand aught of God till then, I can have till then no evidence that I ought to be regenerated. But, sir, all this is wide of the mark. What is the use of talking to me of the authority of God, of the word of God, when I do not even believe that there is a God?"

"Not believe there is a God! Of that there is abundance of evidence."

"For you doubtless, who have been regenerated; but for me who have only my natural faculties, and who according to you have no faculty by which I can take cognizance of Divine things, I should like to know what evidence there is?"

CHAPTER VIII.

ARGUMENT FROM NATURE.

"I FORGIVE your sneer; but that there is a God, it appears to me, no man can really doubt, who has eyes to look abroad on nature. Every object I see from the spire of grass to the heavenly bodies proclaims to me the existence of God."

"Because you see them only with the eyes of the believer. You believe in God, and therefore do not want any proof. You transport God from your own mind into nature, and therefore find him there. But, if you had not a real or imaginary God within you, I much question whether you would discover one in nature. To me nature indicates merely its own existence, and says nothing of any existence beyond itself."

"Nature is an effect, and every effect implies a cause."

"When you call nature an effect, you assume the point in question. Is nature an *effect*?"

"Nature *is*. It did not make itself. It must then have been made. If made, it is an effect."

"This is a mere change of terms without any progress in the argument. I ask your proof that nature was made."

"Its simple existence is a proof that it was made, unless you are prepared to say that it came by chance."

"I know nothing of chance: no atheist believes in chance. But I am not driven to the alternative you suppose. Before I shall be under the necessity of admitting the world came by chance, you must prove that it ever did come at all."

"But it is here, and of course must have come, either by chance or a maker."

"You say nature is *here;* I might ask you, *where?* but let that pass. The world *is*, that I grant; but I pray you to inform me how from simple existence you infer a maker? Can nothing exist without a maker?"

"Nothing, except Him who makes all things."

"Your exception is fatal to your argument. If there can be one existence without a maker, then simple existence does not imply a maker. You have told me the world must have had a maker, simply because it is. This reasoning rests for its legitimacy on the assumption that nothing can exist without a cause. But you now tell me of an existence which is uncaused, that is, the existence of him who caused all things."

"I mean merely to assert that nothing can *begin* to exist without a cause."

"According to the principles of reasoning you have adopted, you cannot maintain even this position; but I will for the present accede to it. Nothing can *begin* to exist without a cause. You will now, I presume, give me your proofs, that the world had a beginning."

"That this world had a beginning, is not difficult to prove. Look around you. Does not every thing change under the eye of the spectator? Fix your eyes, if you can, on a single object which is the same that it was, or that does not bear the traces of having begun to exist."

"Apparently there are changes and transformations going on continually around us. You see that flower. A short time since it was a mere bud upon its stalk. You may have watched it grow and develope itself. But after all what have you seen? Simply certain facts of the plant itself. Had your eyes been stronger you might have seen all these facts when you first looked as well as now; for they all existed then. These facts which we learn one after another, we call changes, because they are presented to our inspection successively, in what we name time. But what is time? It is nothing. It but marks the order in which we become acquainted with the phenomena of the universe, whether it be the universe without or within us. We study the universe by parcels, and hence the idea of succession. But to an eye that could take in the whole at once, nature would doubtless

appear as one vast whole. You theologians tell us that with God there is no time. He inhabiteth eternity. With him all is an eternal NOW. To him there can be nothing new, nothing old, no succession of events, and consequently no change. What then we short-sighted mortals call changes, would, could we but see the whole at one glance, appear but contemporary parts of one immutable and indissoluble whole. The more we study nature the greater is the number, the variety of the phenomena which present themselves to our inspection; and though these phenomena present themselves, as we say, successively, still all we can say of them is that they are parts of the universe itself, and from which nothing is to be inferred beyond the universe of which they are contemporary and constituent parts."

"Your remarks are quite too metaphysical for my understanding. But nobody can really doubt that this world began to exist. If any farther evidence of this fact were wanted we could find it in the marks of design which we everywhere see around us. Now design necessarily establishes the existence of a designer. If the universe be proved to be the product of a designer, you will not question but it had a beginning."

"Of course not. But I am inclined to think you will hardly succeed in establishing design, till you have established the fact that the universe began to exist."

"Can you mark the order, the regularity, the adaptation of one thing to another, everywhere obvious in nature, and not regard it as the work of design?"

"There is, sir, in the whole of your argument, and in the arguments of all Natural Theologians I am acquainted with, an assumption of the very point I want proved. You assume everywhere that simple existence is the proof of a maker. The existence of nature, you tell me, is a proof that it was made. The existence of certain phenomena in nature, you tell me, is a proof that they are the effect of design. Now, in all this argumentation there is this grand defect; your inferences require that your premises should be universally true. If it were true that nothing could exist without a cause, your inferences would be just. But you deny the universality of the proposition, because, were it admitted, it would follow that nothing does or can exist. Your God, inasmuch as he is supposed to exist, would require a maker as well as the universe. Now I see nature as it is. When I examine it, I find what from their analogy to the same things in art, I call order, regularity, adaptation of one thing to another; but these words, order, regularity, adaptation, only name certain facts which exist in nature. These facts prove nothing more than the simple character of nature as it appears to my observation. At least, unless you are prepared to say that they cannot exist without a creator."

"I am prepared to say that."

"And I, sir, am prepared to deny it. I assert that they can exist without a creator; and for proof I refer you to nature. You see in nature, order, regularity, adaptation. Now prove to me that nature was created, or else admit that these can exist without a creator."

"Your argument is defective. You assume the world was *not* made, a point you cannot prove."

"And you, sir, assume that it *was* made, a point you cannot prove. I have as good a right to assume the existence in nature of the facts to which you refer me as a proof that no creator was necessary, as you have to assume that existence as a proof of the contrary proposition."

"I point you to order, regularity, adaptation, as proofs of design, and from the fact of design I conclude very legitimately to a designer."

"You point to what you call order, regularity, adaptation; that is, to certain facts of nature, and *because* these facts exist there you infer that nature is the product of a designer. You assume here, as I have before told you, that these facts could not exist unless they were created. Are you prepared to lay it down as a universal proposition that the facts you choose to name order, regularity, adaptation, can never exist without being created?"

"I have hardly reflected on that point, but I think I am."

"Can there be anything in the effect which is not in the cause?"

"Explain yourself."

"Some of you theologians have inferred the existence of an intelligent cause of nature, because intelligence, to wit, in man, is one of its phenomena. But, say they, if there were no intelligence in the cause there could be none in the effect. But there is intelligence in the effect. Therefore there is intelligence in the cause. Thus Paley, from the benevolent tendency of creation, concludes to the benevolence of its creator. If there be benevolence in the effect, he infers there must be in the cause. So if there be order, regularity, adaptation in the effect, why not in the cause? Now if there were no order, no regularity, no fitness, (for this is what we mean by adaptation) in God, could there be any in his works?"

"Of course not."

"And in him these must exist uncaused. You will not contend now, I presume, that these cannot exist without being created, since you are forced to admit that they exist in God. The bare existence then of the facts termed order, regularity, fitness, is not a proof that they are created, or the product of a designer. If they exist in one instance, as you must admit they can, without a maker, I ask you how then simple existence proves that they cannot in another? In order to make out your case, it is necessary that you should point these out

to me, in a world which you have proved to have had a beginning. If you could prove the world had a beginning in time, your argumentation would be conclusive. Design doubtless implies a designer, and a work of design doubtless has a beginning; but you must first prove that the universe had a beginning before you can establish the fact of design. This you have not done, and I see not how you can do it. The world is; this is all I know. Its existence is to me an enigma I cannot solve. If you undertake to solve it by referring to another existence beyond it as its cause, you merely place the difficulty a step farther back, but do not obviate it. I should find the same enigma in the existence of its cause, for how could that existence be without a cause? No matter how far you extend the chain of sequences, the same problem ever recurs. I have sought in vain to solve it."

"Well, Mr. Elwood, we have hardly come to any result, and I am sorry to say that I am unable to continue the discussion longer at present. You have taken a somewhat different ground from what I anticipated, and some of your arguments are ingenious, and show a mind which I am sorry to see thrown away on the barren waste of atheism. You were made for better things, for a nobler destiny. Call on me again day after tomorrow, and I shall be at leisure, to continue the discussion; and I hope with a happier issue. Good day, my friend."

This conversation merely shows the insufficiency of the common argument from nature, an argument much insisted on by those who seek arguments for others not for themselves; but which is quite too easily set aside. Perhaps no man has stated this argument better than Paley in his Natural Theology, and yet it was that work which first raised my doubts of the existence of God. If Paley had really felt the need of convincing himself of the being of a God, he never could have written that book. No man is ever converted to Theism by the argument from nature. And the reason why that argument is relied on is because it is the most easily adduced, and those who use it, feeling no need of any argument for themselves, think it ought to silence the atheist. I shall have occasion to show, before I get through, that no man does ever really deny the existence of God. Men may reject the term, but never the reality. The existence of God is never proved, and never needs to be proved. All the atheist wants is to analyze his own faith. and whenever he does that he will find God at the bottom. But to analyze one's own faith is a matter which requires some close thinking, and the Natural Theologians would fain get along without thinking.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SACRIFICE.

WHILE the conversation I have just detailed was going on, there was another conversation held between very different parties, and in which I also was interested. Mr. Smith, my morning visiter, of whom I have given some account, early sought out Elizabeth, apparently for the purpose of congratulating her on her recent conversion. He found her alone, with the Bible open before her, absorbed in deep meditation.

I have said Mr. Smith was in the main an honest, well-meaning man. Nobody could really doubt his sincerity or his ardent desire to save souls; but he had been so accustomed to dwell on another world, to see a material and burning hell before him, that this world and all the social feelings and duties which belong to it, had lost nearly all hold upon his conscience and his heart. His whole mind seemed contracted to one burning thought — hell, and his whole soul to one all-absorbing desire, — escape from hell for himself and others.

To this end he counted no sacrifice, valued no kind feeling, social harmony, domestic peace or love. So intent was he upon gaining this end, so eager was he after it, that he rudely dashed against the most sacred relations of private life, hurled husband against wife, wife against husband, parent against child, and child against parent, brother against sister, and sister against brother. In his heart he would be and doubtless thought himself little less than an angel of God; but he passed through society, over the domestic hearth, a minister of wrath, scattering blight and death. He had now come to dash with poison the cup of life for Elizabeth, and to exert the influence he had accidentally acquired over her, to blast her brightest prospects and wither her purest and holiest affections.

"In deep meditation!" said he, approaching her, and speaking in as gentle and respectful a tone, as such a being could; "In deep meditation! Thinking, I presume, on your happy escape from the pit of burning. You have great reason to bless God for the work of grace he has done for your soul."

"I do bless God; but I was not thinking of what he had done for me."

"Is it possible that you can for one moment be thinking of anything else?"

"I hope I shall never forget what God has done for me, but I had for one moment forgotten myself. And is there not danger that those who have

been recently converted may think too much of what God has done for them, merely because it is for them rather than for others that he has done it?"

"O, you were thinking of another!"

"I hope there is no harm in escaping sometimes from ourselves to think of our friends."

"Perhaps not. But of whom were you thinking?"

"O, sir, your profession is too grave to concern itself with the idle thoughts of a silly girl."

"If your thoughts are idle, you should not indulge them, for you must one day account for every idle thought to God. If they are serious thoughts you need not blush to disclose them to one of God's ministers."

"Sir, there may be subjects strictly our own, and with which no stranger, whatever his profession, has a right, or should be suffered to intermeddle. Some spot is there in every heart, which should be sacred from the stranger's foot."

"God knows those subjects; you cannot conceal them from him; and why seek to conceal them from his ministers?"

"The heart, sir, hath joys and sorrows to be shared only with those whom the heart selects."

"I understand you. I am not to have your confidence in a matter which intimately concerns your everlasting welfare. When I saw you sinking down to irretrievable wo, I warned you of your

danger; and now when I see you about rushing into a connexion which can end only in your eternal ruin, I am not to be deterred from telling you of the awful peril you run."

"Mr. Smith, this is a subject on which you and I cannot converse; and I entreat you to say no more."

"I will speak, and you shall hear; I have come to you from God, commanded to talk to you on this very topic. It may pain you, but better that you suffer now, than hereafter."

"I beseech you, say no more."

"Stay; I must do my duty. I have a message from God and I must deliver it. God forbids this union which you contemplate. The Holy Ghost says 'be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what concord hath Christ with Belial, or he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath God with idols?' You by your conversion have become a temple of the living God, and dare you suffer yourself to be desecrated by an atheist?"

"Surely, sir, you do not suppose that passage alludes to marriage, or that if it does it is to be taken literally?"

"I suppose the Holy Ghost means what he says. I am not wise enough to correct either his language or his meaning."

"But Paul says the unbelieving wife shall be

sanctified by the believing husband, and the unbelieving husband by the believing wife."

"True; but he said that in reference to those who had been married before either became a believer, in order to satisfy any scruples of conscience they might feel about living together as man and wife, after one or the other had been converted to Christianity."

"That suits my case. Charles and I were contracted before I was converted. Before that event, we had pledged our faith, and were married in the eyes of Heaven, as much as we shall be after man has performed the customary legal ceremony."

"That is a dangerous doctrine, and one which I never expected to hear from a young lady, unless of avowed licentious principles. You are not married. You have only given your consent to be married on some future day. But when you gave that consent you were in nature's darkness; you knew not what you did. Your eyes are now opened; you now see the wickedness of denying God. The Holy Ghost commands you to recall that consent, or yours must be the peril."

"I fear no other danger than that of doing wrong. But you do not know Charles. He would gladly be a Christian, and when he left me yesterday, I could not but hope that he was not far from the kingdom of heaven."

"Delusion all! No man can be further from the kingdom of heaven than he who denies both

God and heaven. I tell you he is a hardened infidel." And then as if half suspecting that he had said too much, he added, "Still I do not know but you may be the chosen instrument of bringing him into the church. You need not reject him at once; but let him understand that he must give his heart to God before you can consent to be his." So saying, he left the trembling, nearly distracted girl, to go and do his master's work elsewhere.*

The agony which Elizabeth suffered during this whole conversation may be more easily imagined than described. She had lavished upon me all the wealth of her heart. She had loved me with a sincerity and depth of affection, enhanced by the apparently unfriendliness of my condition. Like a true woman she had clung to me the closer for

* This must seem to my readers a mere fancy sketch, for I presume such conversations do not take place in these days; but they were very common when I was a young man. One of the most common methods resorted to by revivalists was to make the love which a young man had for a young woman, and the love he hoped for in return, the means of his conversion to the church. My own case was not a singular one. The girl was instructed to throw her arms around her lover's neck, and entreat him, by all his affection for her, to join the church; but at the same time to assure him, that she could never consent to be his unless he gave evidences of conversion. There was some knowledge of human nature in this, and these fair apostles were not unfrequently successful as well as eloquent pleaders for God, especially when seconded by the burning passions of their youthful admirers.

the reason that all else seemed to have abandoned me. It is not woman that leaves us when most we need her presence. I have had my share of adversity; I have suffered from the world more than I care to tell; but I have ever found in woman a kind and succoring spirit. Her love has ever shed a hallowed light along my pathway, cheered me in my darkest hours, and given me ever the courage and the strength to battle with my enemies, and regain the mastery of myself. There are those who speak lightly of woman; I have learned to reverence her as the brightest earthly manifestation of the Divinity.

Elizabeth had loved me, and in all her visions of the future I of course held a prominent place, and it were a foolish affectation to doubt that I constituted their principal charm. To banish me now, to strike my image from her heart, to break with me the faith she had plighted, — the thought of it was not to be endured. And yet what a mysterious nature is this of ours! The very intensity of her love for me alarmed her conscience. She had been but recently converted, and was still laboring under strong excitement. She had just dedicated herself to God. She must be his and his only. Did she not owe everything to God? Should she not love him with her whole heart, and ought she not to sacrifice everything to him? Was not religion, in its very nature, a sacrifice? Would she not be violating its most solemn injunctions, if she retain-

ed anything which she loved more than God? Did she not in fact love me more than him? I was dearer to her than all the world beside; but then would not the sacrifice of me to God be so much the more meritorious? If she retained me would it not be a proof, that she counted one treasure too precious to be surrendered? Was she not commanded to forsake father, mother, sister, brother, for God, to give up everything for God, which should come between her and him, though it should be like plucking out a right eye or cutting off a right hand? Must she not now choose between God and man, between religion and love? She must.

I mean not to say that this was sound reasoning; but I apprehend that it requires no deep insight into human nature, to be made aware that in many individuals, religion is a much stronger passion than love, and that in certain states of mind, and if the religious affection takes that turn, the more costly the sacrifice, the more resolute are we to make it. In her calm and rational moments, I do not believe Elizabeth would have come to the conclusion she did; but as she was wrought up to a state of pious exaltation, the idea of being able to achieve so great a victory over herself, as that of sacrificing her love on the altar of religion, operated as a powerful spell on her whole nature, and blinded her to everything else. It almost instantly became as it were a fixed idea, to which every-

thing must henceforth be subordinated. Religion therefore triumphed, and with a martyr-like spirit, she resolved to give me up. Blame her not. If she had not possessed a noble nature, such a sacrifice she had never resolved to make.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISMISSAL.

As the fates would have it, I called on Elizabeth at the very moment when she had finally taken her resolution to sacrifice her love for me to prove that her love for God was supreme. My visit was inopportune, — she was embarrassed, and as women do sometimes, burst into tears. I was not a little astonished, and perhaps not altogether pleased; for I confess I could never yet discover that beauty in tears was at all improved, — unless they were tears of welcome or of sympathy. "Elizabeth," said I, addressing her as gently as I could, "what is this? why do I see you in tears?"

"It is but a passing weakness," said she, making an effort to command herself, "my first, as I trust it will be my last."

"But why do I find you so agitated?"

"Charles," said she, rising and speaking with great solemnity, "you and I can henceforth be to each other only as friends."

"Elizabeth, I do not hear you; I have no ears for such words."

"You must hear me, and believe me. I have taken my resolution."

"Unsay what you have said, and be yourself again. Some strange infatuation has seized you for the moment, or you are merely trying my feelings. You need not doubt my love for you. I have given you already all the proofs you can ask, or man can give. I must also say, it is hardly in character for you to trifle with any one's affections, much less with mine."

"Charles, I am not trifling with your affections, nor has any strange infatuation seized me. I speak seriously and solemnly. I doubt not that you love me as well as man usually loves woman; and I have never disguised from myself nor from you, the strong affection I have for you. I have loved you as truly, as sincerely as you yourself could desire. I may to a certain extent subdue my love; but I shall never forget it. You have been too much to me, have played too conspicuous a part in all my dreams of the future, to be ever otherwise than a dear friend. Woman's heart never forgets. The flower of her love may be trampled on, but retains ever its fragrance and freshness. It blooms immortal. But, Charles, I must be the bride of heaven: I have given myself to God, and I must be his alone."

"A formidable rival you have given me! Pray, has your ghostly adviser, whom I saw stealing away as I came in, been tutoring you on this sub-

ject? He has doubtless told you not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever."

"And if he has, has he not given me good advice, not for me, but for you? To you, do my best, I must, unless you should be converted to religion, soon appear a weak and silly woman. My religious zeal will be in your estimation mere fanaticism, and my love to God will seem so much abstracted from that which you will claim as due to yourself. Difference of belief will lead to difference of feeling, to a difference of tastes, and aims, and then to coldness, neglect, perhaps disgust and mutual wretchedness. With views on religion, so widely different as ours are, we can never enjoy that union of soul which we should both crave, and without which we could not be happy."

"I understand nothing of all this. Because you love God more, I see not why you need love me less. I see no reason why God and I should be rivals for your affections. Is the love which you have for God of the same kind with the love you have heretofore avowed for me? Can you not love God, do your duty to him, and also have a heart and a hand for the duties of a wife? According to your sacred books, God himself declared that it was not good for man to be alone, and therefore made woman to be his help-meet. Can she be wanting in her duty to her God, when she lives to the end for which he made her? Woman was

made to be man's help-meet if your religion be true, and it is her glory to be a wife and a mother."

"No. I must live for God alone."

"Some of your divines pretend that we live for God, when we live for his children. You talk of consecrating yourself to God. Do you intend to become a nun? Does your God ask you to live in a cloister and waste your life in singing psalms and repeating *pater nosters*?"

"Charles, your questions do but confirm me in my resolution. You have no sympathy with that religious state of the affections, which I believe myself commanded to cultivate. You even now think me very foolish and are half angry at me."

"True. I regard your piety as a weakness; but I see enough else in your character, which is not weakness, to enable me to overlook that. On the single subject of religion, I of course do not and cannot sympathize with you; but in all else, I am unconscious of any want of sympathy. When we come to live together, to have the same joys and sorrows, the same cares and perplexities, the same hopes and fears, in all other respects, I doubt not that we shall find that oneness of heart and soul, which will secure us as much happiness as mortals have any reason to expect."

"No. Religion must pervade my whole being; it must be inwoven with all my thoughts and feelings, words and actions. You must meet it everywhere and at all times, and wherever and whenever

you meet it, I see from the present interview, it must offend you."

"I see no necessity of making your piety everywhere obtrusive."

"I must love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength."

"And your neighbor as yourself, which means, I take it, your husband. But why not follow the direction of your Saint Paul? 'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself?' If you have pious feelings indulge them. Surely, you must have room enough left for the proper affections of the wife. It must be a strange God in whom you believe, if he should be offended to see you studying to make the man happy to whom you confess yourself not indifferent, and to whom you have solemnly plighted your faith. Though on this last point I do not insist. I ask no one to keep faith with me longer than it is agreeable. I absolve you from all obligation to fulfil a promise you rashly, inconsiderately made. You can dismiss me if you please. I am not a man likely to complain. I was not born to go whining through life. I have already learned the lesson to bear. Still you have had much influence over me, and, until now, I have never conversed with you without wishing myself a Christian. The road to the understanding lies through the heart. Who can tell but through love you may lead me to God, be the means of my conversion?"

"I know not how that would be; but weak, imperfect as I am and always must be, I fear I shall be more likely to expose my faith to your contempt than to commend it to your love and reverence."

"I know of nothing in the past to warrant your fears; you have not changed half so much as you fancy. You have always been religious since I have been acquainted with you. I have rarely witnessed your sensibility to religion, without regretting the loss of my early faith. I am not certain but it was the religious turn of your mind which first attracted my love, and I know that it has tended not a little to strengthen and purify it. Hopeless myself, a child without a father, I have not been displeased to see hope beaming from your eyes, and to hear from your lips the words, 'My Father.' I have never had an earthly father to whom I could apply those words, and it is long since I have had one in heaven. As much opposed as I am to the nonsense and mischief which pass with the multitude under the name of religion, yet ever have I felt that I would give worlds did I possess them, could I once more feel assured that there is another and a better world; could I look up with confidence and say, 'My Father.'"

"Charles, I cannot comprehend you. Can it be that you are in reality an infidel, in love as you are with all beautiful things and good? You seem to me at times all but devout. You are gentle and

forgiving. I have often known you to risk your life for even your enemies. How is this? Is not Christ in you, though you know it not? Own him, I beseech you."

"And be a hypocrite? Never. I have lost my faith as a Christian, but as long as I live I will hold fast to my integrity. I have not the Christian's hopes nor his fears; but I should think meanly of myself, had I only the Christian's virtues."

"I do not understand this. I have always identified all moral excellence with belief in Christ, and been unable to conceive of any virtue separate from Christianity. I have believed that one must be born again, and then he would know the truth; and here you are professing to have experienced all that others do in the new birth, and at the same time denying the existence of God. Is it all a delusion? Can I be certain of nothing? O, Charles do not drive me to skepticism, to madness!"

"Fear me not. To me I own religion appears all a delusion. I neither do nor can know anything about it. But after all you *may* be right. I never set up my own opinions as the measure of truth."

"It is gone. It was but a passing cloud. Religion must be true. I have the witness within. I feel its truth, and even you own that you at times feel the need of it."

"It is hard to efface early impressions. Reminiscences of my childhood and youth sometimes

come up, and I dream; but I awake as soon as reason dawns."

"Reason! Reason! that is the real soul-destroyer! I cannot reason on religion; I hold it too sacred, and I dare not so profane it. I must believe. I have always loved religion. It has ever shed a hallowed light over the world in which I have lived, and made all things around me beautiful and lovely. Within a few days I have felt as I never did before. God has manifested himself to me as he does not to the world. It must be so. I cannot mistake my feelings."

"But they may mislead you."

"And why more than your logic? May we not err by distrusting our feelings too much? These reminiscences of your early life, as you call them, what may they be after all but an outcry from the depth of your being for God, — the strivings of God's spirit with yours to lead you back to himself?"

"So I have sometimes fancied it might be. This is a mysterious nature of ours, and I pretend not to be able to unravel it. It is all dark and inscrutable to me. Thought, which now penetrates the solid marble, pierces through the earth, soars into the heavens, and sooner than I can utter the words, makes the circuit of the universe, is to me a mystery. Love, sympathy, — all the emotions are inexplicable; and not the least so that mystic communion of which we are all at times conscious,

that something which often without external medium advertises us of the presence of the beloved object, and enables us to know before hand the emotions swelling in another's breast. Then this void I am conscious of within, which I am ever trying to fill, and which nothing but infinity seems capable of filling — this eternal craving of ours to break through the narrow bounds of the universe and breathe at our ease the free air beyond, — I know not what all this means. There are times when this world is too small for me, when I seem to have that within me which is greater than the universe, thoughts and desires which seem inhabitants of eternity. At times they startle me; but they are the freaks of a wanton imagination; they are fantasy all."

"I know not that. May they not be the soul's reminiscences of God, its native land? Are we not exiles from our home? and are not these thoughts and desires our sighs and yearnings for a return?"

"So perhaps old Plato would have said. But I dare not trust myself in a region so unsubstantial. I leave these matters to the mystics, and confine myself to my five senses and the operations of my understanding. These vague longings are to me only the feverish dreams of a perturbed sleep."

What would have been the result of our interview, I know not, had it not been suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted. I think I should have

shaken Elizabeth's resolution, and she perhaps would have soothed my unbelief with visions of that mystic land, upon which, unknown to herself, she was entering. The natural cure for skepticism is mysticism, and had we been left to ourselves, I think it very possible I should have lost my atheism, and lived with Elizabeth a sort of theosophic life. But it was otherwise ordered. I have already mentioned Elizabeth's brother George. With him I had been longer acquainted, than with her. I had been able, on my first coming to reside in the neighborhood, to render him some essential service, which became the prelude to an intimacy with him, and, what I had valued somewhat more, with his sister. George would never have been selected by me as a friend, had I not served him. He had respectable talents, was well educated, but not precisely a man to my taste.

The last time I had seen him, he was on the anxious seats, where he succeeded in becoming converted. He was now a saint, and could address his former friends and associates as sinners. Conversion operates differently on different subjects. Some it makes better, manward as well as Godward, sweetening their dispositions, elevating their feelings and aims ; others it makes decidedly worse. By persuading them that they are saints, it permits them to fancy that they can do no wrong because they are saints. Of this latter class was my friend George. Religion had in him, combined with a

harsh, haughty and vindictive temper, and had given him the courage to display what he had previously studied to conceal.

In a social point of view, he was evidently my superior. His parents had been notable people in their day, and to him and his sister who resided with their widowed mother, had descended an ample fortune. But I was somewhat of an adventurer. Nobody knew whence I came, or what was my profession or occupation. I could not be absolutely poor, but I had evidently not been accustomed to refined society, and it was most likely that I was of obscure origin. On these points I kept my own counsel. I had perhaps a tale to tell, had I chosen; but I had never learned that a man suffered by knowing more of himself than others knew of him. I shall not tell the tale now, for it would not be credited if I should. But evidently, although George had even suggested and encouraged my suit to his sister, he did not now regard me as the most desirable suitor. Mr. Smith and a few other pious friends had conversed with him, and given him some advice.

Entering the room where we were conversing, and hastily approaching me, and addressing me in a rude and haughty manner, "Sir," said he, "you and I have been much together for some time past; I have permitted you to come and go as if this house were your home; I have borne with you in the hope that your pernicious principles might

be corrected. It is in vain to indulge that hope any longer; and as I do not choose to associate with an atheist, you will have the goodness henceforth to spare my sister and myself the pleasure of your company. You will find neither of us at home to you hereafter."

"Say not so, brother," exclaimed Elizabeth; "you wrong your own heart; you wrong the charity of the blessed Gospel; you wrong Charles, who you know saved your life at the risk of his own."

"What I have said, I have said," replied he.

"Say no more, Elizabeth," I interposed. "He will, I fear, one day need my forgiveness; if so, he will find it. Farewell, Elizabeth. Otherwise I would have parted with you. I know not whether the resolution you mentioned when I came in is to be regarded as final or not. That is a matter which rests with yourself. I am not the man to entreat any one to break a resolution in my favor. If, however, you alter your mind, you will find me as I was. Farewell."

CHAPTER XI.

PRIESTCRAFT.

THE incidents related in my last chapter, but ill prepared me for my second interview with Mr. Wilson. In my first interview I was calm, candid, willing, even anxious to become, if not a believer in all that passes for religion, at least in God and immortality. But now I was ruffled, I was exasperated against the clergy, those meddling priests as I regarded them; and I was resolved to combat Mr. Wilson's arguments with all the force of reason I could master. On this second day I found Mr. Wilson where I did before, but not this time alone; some five or six of his brother clergymen were with him, all of whom, with faces as grave as a church-yard, showed a becoming horror at my approach. I was greeted with scarcely a single civil word. The clergymen looked up to heaven and sighed, hung down their heads and were silent.

"I have called," said I, addressing myself to Mr. Wilson, "to hear what farther you have to offer on the subject of our former conversation."

"Ah, I had forgotten," replied he in a sanctimo-

nious tone, "you are the young man with whom I had some conversation on the existence of God; was not what I said sufficient to remove your doubts?"

"No, sir."

"Then I fear all that I can say will be useless. He who denies the existence of God, is too far gone in blindness of mind and hardness of heart, to be affected by anything short of the omnipotent workings of the Holy Ghost. He is past being reasoned with. In the language of the Holy Ghost, he is a fool."

"Be that as it may; if you have any reasons to offer, I can hear them; and if they have any weight I can feel them."

"I will pray for you."

"I want your reasons, not your prayers."

"The Scriptures forbid us to cast pearls before swine, or to give that which is holy unto dogs."

"An unnecessary prohibition in your case."

"Would you insult one of God's ministers?"

"I might answer you in the words of one of your saints, slightly varied, 'I wist not that thou wast a minister of God, thou whited wall;' but I insult no man, and shall always repel insult, let it come from whom it may."

"I perceive, young man, that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity."

"I am not here, sir, to be informed of my condition, but at your special invitation, to be resolved

of certain doubts, which you boasted your skill to solve. If you have lost confidence in your ability, or if you are otherwise engaged, I can retire."

"Go to God with your doubts. He only can solve them; you are quarrelling with God. Go and make your peace with God."

"Your directions are admirable. Pity they had not occurred to you a little sooner. But be so good now as to hear me a moment."

"I have no wish to hear you."

"I care not for that; but hear me you shall. You have given me your message, and I will give you mine. I, sir, was early taught to love God, and I early sought to serve him. I was early religious, and for some years found in religion all the enjoyment I had. Sectarian dissentions sprung up, grieved and finally disgusted me. They compelled me to ask why I supported Christianity. I asked but could not answer; I went to my minister, and he told me if I doubted I should be damned."

"And told you the truth," said Mr. Wilson.

"I went to another, another, and still another, and received the same answer. I complained not. I resorted to the Bible, read, re-read it, read every thing I could lay my hands on that promised to throw light on the subject laboring in my mind; I spent years in study; I prayed, and prayed God, by night and by day, to help me. I sought for the truth with my whole heart."

"That is false," interposed one of the clergymen present; "no man ever prayed to God for the truth and remained an atheist."

"One article after another of my faith went, till I found myself at last without hope in immortality or belief in God. I wept at this result; but I said nothing,—sought to unsettle no one's faith, but pursued my way peaceably as a man, a citizen, and a friend. At the request of one, whose request to me is a command, I attended the other day one of your inquiry meetings; you know what passed there. At your request I called here, with what result, you know as well as I. I am here again at your request, and I have thus far, for reasons best known to yourselves, received only insult and abuse. One word therefore to you, and to all who call yourselves ministers of God; I have found you always loud in your professions, but always unable or unwilling to give a reason for the faith you enjoin. I have ever found you in relation to your opponents proud, haughty, overbearing, relentless; professed preachers of peace and love, I have ever found you sowing the seeds of discord, meddling with every one's private affairs, poisoning the cup of domestic bliss, and withering the purest and holiest affections of the human heart. You have brought wrath and hatred into this hitherto peaceful village; you have blasted my hopes of happiness, done me all the injury man can do to man; and what you have done to me

you have done to thousands, and will do, so long as the world endures your profession. You make earth a hell that your own services may be in request — make the people believe in a God of wrath that you may be employed as mediators between them and his vengeance. Did I believe in your imaginary place of punishment, I would say to you in the words of your master, 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' Hitherto I have treated you with respect; there is war between us now, and earth shall be rid of you, or I will die in the attempt. Farewell. Before you dream of converting the infidel, learn humility, honesty, and good manners."

So saying, I left the house and returned to my lodgings. When I was gone the reverend gentlemen looked at one another and smiled; "that young man," said one of them, "would make a most capital preacher were he only on the right side." "Perhaps," said another, "he is nearer right than we should be willing the world should believe." "Never mind," said still another, "the people are superstitious; they will have some kind of worship, and we must let them have their way." These reverend gentlemen it seems understood one another.

CHAPTER XII.

IMMORTALITY.

I Pass over several months in which nothing, I can bring myself to relate, of much importance occurred. Elizabeth and I met a few times after the interview I have mentioned. She was ever the same pure-minded, affectionate girl; but the view which she had taken of her duty to God, and the struggle which thence ensued between religion and love, surrounded as she was by pious friends whose zeal for the soul hereafter far outran their knowledge of what would constitute its real well-being here, preyed upon her health, and threatened the worst results. From those results I raise not the veil.

One tie alone was left me, one alone bound me to my race, and to virtue. My mother, bowed with years and afflictions, still lived, though in a distant part of the country. A letter from a distant relative with whom she resided, informed me that she was very ill, and demanded my presence, as she could not survive many days. I need not say this

letter afflicted me. I had not seen my mother for several years; not because I wanted filial affection, but I had rarely been able to do as I would. Poverty is a stern master, and when combined with talent and ambition, often compels us to seem wanting in most of the better and more amiable affections of our nature. I had always loved and reverenced my mother; but her image rose before me now as it never had before. It looked mournfully upon me, and in the eloquence of mute sorrow seemed to upbraid me with neglect, and to tell me that I had failed to prove myself a good son.

I lost no time in complying with my mother's request. I found her still living, but evidently near her last. She recognised me, brightened up a moment, thanked me for coming to see her, thanked her God that he had permitted her to look once more upon the face of her son, her only child, and to God, the God in whom she believed, who had protected her through life, and in whom she had found solace and support under all her trials and sorrows, she commended me, with all the fervor of undoubting piety, and the warmth of maternal love, for time and eternity. The effort exhausted her; she sunk into a sort of lethargy, which in a few hours proved to be the sleep of death.

I watched by the lifeless body; I followed it to its resting place in the earth; went at twilight and

stood by the grave which had closed over it. Do you ask what were my thoughts and feelings?

I was a disbeliever, but I was a man, and had a heart; and not the less a heart because few shared its affections. But the feelings with which professed believers and unbelievers meet death, either for themselves or for others, are very nearly similar. When death comes into the circle of our friends and sunders the cords of affection, it is backward we look, not forward, and we are with the departed as he lives in our memories, not as he may be in our hopes. The hopes nurtured by religion are very consoling when grief exists only in anticipation, or after time has hallowed it; but they have little power in the moment when it actually breaks in upon the soul, and pierces the heart. Besides, there are few people who know how to use their immortality. Death to the great mass of believers as well as of unbelievers comes as the king of terrors, in the shape of a Total Extinction of being. The immortality of the soul is assented to rather than believed,—believed rather than lived. And withal it is something so far in the distant future, that till long after the spirit has left the body, we think and speak of the loved ones as no more. Rarely does the believer find that relief in the doctrine of immortality, which he insists on with so much eloquence in his controversy with unbelievers. He might find it, he ought to find it, and one day will; but not till he learns that man *is* immortal, and not merely is to be immortal.

I lingered several weeks around the grave of my mother, and in the neighborhood where she had lived. It was the place where I had passed my own childhood and youth. It was the scene of those early associations which become the dearer to us as we leave them the farther behind. I stood where I had sported in the freedom of early childhood; but I stood alone, for no one was there with whom I could speak of its frolics. One feels singularly desolate when he sees only strange faces, and hears only strange voices in what was the home of his early life.

I returned to the village where I resided when I first introduced myself to my readers. But what was that spot to me now? Nature had done much for it, but nature herself is very much what we make her. There must be beauty in our souls, or we shall see no loveliness in her face; and beauty had died out of my soul. She who might have recalled it to life, and thrown its hues over all the world was —— but of that I will not speak.

It was now that I really needed the hope of immortality. The world was to me one vast desert, and life was without end or aim. The hope of immortality is not needed to enable us to bear grief, to meet great calamities. These can be, as they have been, met by the atheist with a serene brow and a tranquil pulse. We need not the hope of immortality in order to meet death with composure. The manner in which we meet death

depends altogether more on the state of our nerves than the nature of our hopes. But we want it when earth has lost its gloss of novelty, when our hopes have been blasted, our affections withered, and the shortness of life and the vanity of all human pursuits have come home to us, and made us exclaim, "Vanity of vanities all is vanity;" we want then the hope of immortality to give to life an end, an aim.

We all of us at times feel this want. The infidel feels it early in life. He learns all too soon, what to him is a withering fact, that man does not complete his destiny on earth. Man never completes anything here. What then shall he do if there be no hereafter? With what courage can I betake myself to my task? I may begin — but the grave lies between me and the completion. Death will come to interrupt my work, and compel me to leave it unfinished. This is more terrible to me than the thought of ceasing to be. I could *almost*, — at least, I think I could — consent to be no more, after I had finished my work, achieved my destiny; but to die before my work is completed, while that destiny is but begun, — this is the death which comes to me indeed as a "King of Terrors."

The hope of another life to be the complement of this, steps in to save us from this death, to give us the courage and the hope *to begin*. The rough sketch shall hereafter become the finished picture,

the artist shall give it the last touch at his ease; the science we had just begun shall be completed, and the incipient destiny shall be achieved. Fear not to begin, thou hast eternity before thee in which to end.

I wanted, at the time of which I speak, this hope. I had no future. I was shut up in this narrow life as in a cage. All for whom I could have lived, labored, and died, were gone, or worse than gone. I had no end, no aim. My affections were driven back to stagnate and become putrid in my own breast. I had no one to care for. The world was to me as if it were not; and yet a strange restlessness came over me. I could be still nowhere. I roved listlessly from object to object, my body was carried from place to place, I knew not why, and asked not myself wherefore. And, yet change of object, change of scene wrought no change within me. I existed, but did not live. He who has no future, has no life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE REFORMER.

It is no part of my plan to give a minute history of my life. My wanderings extended far and lasted a weary while; but time at length began to exert its healing influence, and I to return slowly towards life. I gradually began to make observations on what was passing around me, and was at length arrested by the imperfections of the social state. Wherever I went I beheld injustice, oppression, inequality in wealth, social position, moral and intellectual culture, — the many everywhere toiling for the few. Here is a man well made, with vigorous body and active limbs, an intellect capable of grappling with the weightiest problems of science, and a heart of loving all things which are beautiful and good; and yet is he compelled to toil and rack his brains from morning to night, in order to gain the bare means of subsistence, which shall after all be infinitely inferior to the fare of the rich man's dog. Wealth is everywhere, in practice at least, counted the supreme

good, and everywhere its producers are the poor and wretched. They who toil not, spin not, are they who are clad in soft raiment, and fare sumptuously every day. What monstrous injustice is here!

Here are priests, statesmen, lawyers, all boasting their services, and pretending to manage society as it ought to be managed. But what do they for the mass, the great, unprivileged, hard-handed Many? A rich man is murdered, and the whole community rises to ferret out the murderer; a poor man is murdered, leaving a wife and children to the tender mercies of a heartless world, and no questions are asked. Mothers, pale and emaciated, watch the live long night over their starving little ones; young women are driven by poverty to prostitution; young men are becoming thieves, robbers, murderers, that they may not waste away in absolute want, unknown and unhonored. On every hand vice and crime, and wailing and wo; and the vice and crime of the poor alone exciting horror, and the wailing and wo of the rich alone calling forth commiseration. O, it is a bad world. Society is all wrong. These iniquitous distinctions of class, this injustice, this oppression of the toiling many to feed the luxury, and the vanity of the idle and worse than useless few, must be redressed. But who shall do it? Not the better sort, for they are the better sort only in consequence of their existence; not the poorer sort, for they are igno-

rant, and dependent. Yet it must be done; nay, shall be done. Justice shall be introduced and man's earthly well-being made possible. But who shall do it? I will do it. I will tell these lords of the earth, to their faces, that they are tyrants and oppressors, that a day of vengeance is at hand. I will tell these wronged, down-trodden masses, that they are men, not beasts of burden; that they have as rich a nature as their masters, and as pure blood coursing in their veins. I will speak to them in the name of justice, of freedom, and my voice shall be trumpet-toned. I will wake the dead, and make them feel the might that has for ages slumbered in the peasant's arm; I will bid them stand up men, freemen, and swear, in the depths of their being, that men they will be, living or dying, and that from this time henceforth wrong from man to man shall cease, that the earth shall no longer echo to the groans of the slave, but resound with the songs of liberty, joy, and peace.

Now I had found a purpose, an end, an aim, — a future, and began to live again. No more whimpering, no more sickly sentimentalism; I was a man now, and had a man's work before me. I might stand alone against a hostile world, but what of that? I felt I had that within me, which was more than a match for all the forces it could muster against me; I carried a whole world within me, infinitely superior to the world without me, and which should ere long replace it. O, ye, who

whimper and whine over your petty miseries, go forth into the world, behold the wrongs and outrages to which man subjects his brother, and seek to arrest them; so shall you forget your own puny sorrows, and find the happiness ye sigh for.

Into the great work of reforming society, or rather of reconstructing society, or more accurately still, of pulling down the society I found existing, I now entered with zeal and energy. I had now as I have said a future; nay, I had a religion,—a faith and a cultus, of which I was the apostle, and felt I could be the martyr. I went to the work in right good earnest. I wrote, lectured, published, talked, disputed, thought, dreamed, until sickness, poverty, and exhaustion of mind and energy, caused me to doubt of success, and to pause, and ask myself, if the means I used were adequate to the end I contemplated.

My system was the sensualism of the school of Locke. I relied solely on what I termed enlightened self-interest. I did not doubt but appeals to man's interest would be adequate to my wants. I knew what I proposed was for the interest of all men, and I fancied that all I had to do was to convince them of this fact. But some how or other this was not enough. The truth is, I professed one system, but in fact demanded the results of another. No reform can be effected without sacrifice, and sacrifice comes not from selfishness. I was astonished to find the multitude for whom I

was wasting my life, choosing rather to return to the flesh-pots of their masters than submit to the few inevitable privations of the wilderness which lay between them and the promised land. I had not then learned that the reformer is powerless save as he appeals to men's sense of duty. Show the people that they are bound by the eternal sanctions of duty to effect your reforms, make them feel that the God within commands them, and you may count on them to the last, to go with you to the battle-field, the dungeon, the scaffold, or the cross. But this I learned not till long afterwards.

And then I was a man, and by no means without my share of the weakness of human nature. I commenced with due spirit and confidence, but I gradually began to grow weary of standing ever alone; I grew sick of the combat, and yearned for peace and fellowship with my kind. I was never intended for a warrior, was never fitted to be a reformer. My natural inclinations and tastes were for a quiet and retired life passed in the midst of a family and a choice circle of friends. In laboring for mankind my love for them increased; and in proportion as I became really philanthropic, the solitude to which I was doomed became insupportable. I could not bear to feel that in the vast multitude around me, not a single heart beat in unison with my own. I would love and be loved. Not the race only would I love. I wished for

some one dearer than all to cheer me on to the combat, and welcome my return. It was doubtless a weakness, but it was a weakness I have never been able to get over. The affections have always had great power over me, and in fact have always done with me pretty much as they would. Could I have so generalized my affections as to have cared for mankind only in the abstract, and to have had no craving for sympathy with individuals, I should have been a stronger man, perhaps, and might not have failed in my undertaking. But this was not in my nature. I could never live on abstractions, love everybody in general and nobody in particular. I was alone. There was no God in heaven, to whom I could go for succor; there was no spot on earth to which I could retire for a while, throw off my armor and feel myself secure; no sympathizing soul with whom I could talk over my plans, give free utterance to the feelings which I must ordinarily suppress, and find ample amends for the ungenerous scorn of the world. I felt that I was wronged, that I was misinterpreted, and that it was all in vain to seek to make myself understood. My philanthropy turned sour, and, I grieve to say, I ended by railing against mankind;—a no uncommon case, as I have since learned, with those who set out to be world-reformers. Few are the old men who have not turned their backs upon the dreams of their youth.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN.

While in the condition I have described, — poor, sick, despondent, brooding over abortive projects, affections soured, hopes disappointed, at war with myself and with mankind, — I was visited by a Mr. Howard, an elderly gentleman, who resided some dozen miles distant, of whom I had often heard, but whom I had not before seen. After introducing himself, and some general observations which interested me in his favor, he invited me to accompany him to his residence, assuring me that it would afford him and his family great pleasure, if I would consent to make his home mine for a longer or shorter time, as might suit my convenience. This invitation, which seemed prompted by really generous sentiment, I was in no condition to think lightly of. I accepted it very gratefully; and as I had not many arrangements to make, I was soon ready, and, taking a seat with Mr. Howard in his carriage, we departed.

This Mr. Howard, at the time I speak of, was no every-day character. Endowed by nature with

a warm heart, a clear and discriminating mind, he had spared no pains in cultivating his natural advantages. He was well acquainted with history, familiar with all the general literature of the day, and what was better than all, he had mingled in the world, had seen men in all conditions and under nearly all aspects, and that too without losing his love for them, or his strong desire to serve them. He had been absent in Europe for some time, or it is possible that he had interested himself in my movements much earlier. On his return home, he had been informed by his family, that there was a man making some noise in the neighboring city, about a radical change in society, who was laboring to introduce a state of absolute social equality; but, they added, it is said he is an atheist, and a very dangerous man in the community. Mr. Howard also heard of me from other quarters, and heard too that I seemed to be sincere, that I had made some sacrifices for what I held to be the cause of humanity, and that I was now in ill-health, and most likely destitute of the common comforts of life, if not even its necessaries. This was enough. "That man of whom you speak," said he, "if what you tell me be correct, is no atheist. God is love, and no man who sincerely loves his brother can be a disbeliever in God. I will see him, and thank him in the name of religion, for his efforts at social reform; for if I do not mistake his character, he has much more of christianity

than have the great mass of the professed followers of Jesus." He was as good as his word, and had now called on me as I have related, and invited me to his home.

"Mr. Elwood," said he, as the carriage drove off, "I have been much interested in what I have heard respecting your efforts in the cause of social melioration. I have just returned from the Old World. I have seen its most favored countries, have spent considerable time in examining the rich monuments of its genius, arts and industry; but everywhere, amidst the much which I have heartily approved, and wished to see my countrymen studying to imitate, I have been pained to witness the depressed condition of the great mass of the people. The favored few may be enlightened, cultivated, refined; but the many are almost uniformly ignorant, half-brutish, and shut out of from nearly all the advantages society was instituted by the Creator to secure to its members. The splendid palaces rise side by side with the wretched hovels of the poor. They may be filled with every luxury for every sense, wrung from the toil and sweat of the mass; but their occupants, notwithstanding their intelligence, refinement and hospitality, seem never to have dreamed that the many were not made for the express purpose of ministering to their pleasure; and on their benighted minds dawns never the great doctrine of the common brotherhood of the race. I sometimes lost

my patience. I told a judge one day that I would rather take my chance at the last day, with those he would hang than with himself. They were victims of an order of things they had not created, and could not control; of which he was one of the feed upholders. Instead of using the talents and means of influence God had entrusted to him, for the melioration of that order, he exerted them merely to crush whomsoever should dare disclose its defects or seek to remedy them.

"I have now returned home, and here, I am sorry to say, I find the germs of the same order, the same principles and tendencies at work, and if resulting as yet in evils of less magnitude, it is owing to certain accidental causes, every day becoming less and less active. The lines of distinction between the great mass of the people and the favored few, are every day becoming broader and more indelible. Labor is held in less esteem than it was, and is not so well rewarded. Wages, perhaps, are nominally higher, the laboring man may consume more and richer articles of food and clothing; but if I am not greatly mistaken, he finds it more than proportionally more difficult to maintain his former relative standing. Poverty keeps pace with wealth, and not unfrequently outruns it. Poor men may indeed become rich, and rich men poor; but the rich and the poor still remain; the perpetual shifting of individuals leaves the classes as they were, neither lessening their

numbers nor diminishing their evil consequences. The evil does not consist in the fact that these individuals rather than those, constitute the rich or the poor, but in the fact that there are both rich and poor.

"I should pay little regard to this inequality in wealth, were its results confined to the mere physical well-being or suffering of the members of society. I am mainly affected by its moral results, and those are disastrous. On the one hand, the rich become vain, arrogant, forgetful of their responsibilities, and duties, and of course immoral. For he, in the strongest sense of the word, is immoral, who neglects his duties to society, or fails to vindicate to the full extent of his ability, the rights and the well-being of the many, however amiable he may be in his private relations, polished in his manners, or respectable in the eyes of the world. On the other hand, the poor become discontented, uneasy, and discouraged; — lose all self-respect, all self-confidence, moulder earthward, and live and die but a single step above the brutes. O! sir, the magnitude of the evil is immense, and from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for calling public attention to it, and for laboring to remove it."

"You are the first man, Mr. Howard," I replied, "who has ever addressed me in this style, — the first who has not either condemned me outright, or exhorted me to be prudent, and not say aught to alarm the weak and timid. With a few such

friends to the people as you appear to be, I had not failed in my undertaking, and in the bitterness of disappointment exclaimed with the Spanish Proverb, 'Mankind is an ass — kicks him who attempts to take off his panniers.' But, sir, while your language touches me sensibly, it also surprises me not a little. I have always understood that you were rich and a Christian."

"And what is there in that to surprise you?"

"Every rich man I have hitherto met has cried out against me, called me an agrarian, a jacobin, a leveler, and sounded the alarm, 'property is in danger.' And Christians have been my most bitter and uncompromising enemies. They have always met me with the assurance that these social inequalities and distinctions I deplore and would remove, are of Divine appointment, the express will of God, and that it is therefore impious as well as foolish to war against them."

"There may be some truth in what you say, but I trust and believe you exaggerate. The rich men of whom you complain, are not so properly termed rich men as business men, men who are not rich but are seeking to be, — men who occupy a position they would not, and who know not how to attain to the rank, influence and consideration they crave, but by using their fellow beings. They would be richer than they are, but they can be only by availing themselves adroitly, not to say dishonestly, of the labors of others. Labor is

profitable to the buyer in proportion to its cheapness, and, like everything else, its cheapness depends on the supply in the market. It is therefore, as they view the matter, for their interest to keep the supply as large as possible. This supply can be large only on the condition that there be a large number of individuals who are solely dependent on the sale of their labor for their means of subsistence. Your efforts, had they succeeded, would have increased the number of independent proprietors, and diminished the number of mere laborers; consequently the supply of labor which should be for sale, and consequently, again, would have enhanced its price, and therefore lessened the profits of its purchasers. Hence the opposition you have encountered from the business part of the community. But there are rich men who are truly enlightened, who feel that they hold their riches as a trust from Heaven to be employed not for their own private advantage, but in the sacred cause of humanity, in diffusing universally truth, justice and love. These men are not your enemies, but your real friends, who take the deepest interest in your movements, and who are the first to espouse your cause and will be the last to desert it. The number of these individuals is every day increasing, and I could point you to not a few who would willingly impoverish themselves, if they could see that by so doing they would contribute to the moral and social elevation of the people."

"But how do you reconcile your democratic doctrines with your christianity? It is difficult for me to conceive how it is possible that a true Christian, so far forth as he is Christian, should labor for the social regeneration of mankind."

"I owe my Christian friends no apology for my democratic sentiments. It is as a Christian that I take a deep and abiding interest in the well-being of my race, that I labor to elevate, morally, intellectually and physically, the poorest and most numerous class; and I were no Christian, if I did not. Christianity is the poor man's religion."

"So I have heard the clergy say; but why they say so, I know not, unless it be because Christianity keeps the multitude star-gazing, so that the rich and the great may enjoy the fruits of the earth unobserved. It may be that it is the poor man's religion, because it enjoins upon him submission to a state of things, of which he is the victim, and cries out 'Order, Order,' whenever the people take it into their heads to better their condition; and because it leagues with the despot and furnishes the warrant of the Almighty to sanction his despotism."

"I have," replied Mr. Howard, "a profound respect for the clergy, and am grateful to them for the much they have done, directly or indirectly, to advance the civilization of mankind; but I have yet to learn that they are infallible. They are in fact the creatures as well as the creators of their

times. I do not, because I cannot honestly, join in the usual declamation against them. The charges generally preferred against them belong to the circumstances in which they are placed, rather than to themselves. It is given only to here and there a man among the clergy as well as the rest of mankind to stand out from his own age, the prophet and the representative of the future. The clergy may have had learning, but in general they have not been deeply versed in human nature. They are unfavorably situated, especially in our times. When they visit, they find the house swept and garnished; the child has on its best bib and tucker, and every one is clad in his Sunday suit. The best side is out. The real state of things is not seen. The clergy too have depended on books rather than on observation; and very different are the men and women of books from the men and women who actually live and breathe and move in the world round and about us. They have also inquired much oftener and altogether more earnestly, what is orthodox, than what is true; what will the church approve, than what she ought to approve, and consequently have had little time to bestow upon things as they really are.

"As a body the clergy have never comprehended, have never been capable of comprehending the real character of christianity. Nothing is more unlike the real conception of Jesus than what you and the majority of the Christian world

call the Christian religion. What you call the religion of Jesus may contain some of the elements of christianity, for it were not possible for the human race to overlook them all; but Christianity itself, as it existed in the mind of its author, is yet to be revealed.

"I am a Christian, but I am a Christian in my own way, and on my own hook. I learn of Jesus. I have as good a right to interpret him as any one else has; and if I interpret him aright, most others do not. The age in which he lived did not comprehend him, for some would have made him a king, and others crucified him between two thieves. His immediate disciples did not comprehend him, as may be collected from his reproofs, their confessions, disputes and changes of opinion. Their disciples, further removed still, it is reasonable to suppose comprehended him still less.

"What now passes for christianity is catholicism. Protestantism, so far forth as it is protestantism, is not a religion, and the religion we find connected with it in the minds and hearts of protestants, is merely what has been retained of catholicism. Religion affirms; it never does, never can protest. Catholicism succeeded to judaism on the one hand, and paganism, as modified by the Alexandrians, on the other. It was a compound of both, immeasurably their superior, but immeasurably below the conception of Jesus. It borrowed indeed many terms from the Nazarene

Reformer; but in most cases it interpreted them by the ideas and associations of the old religions. I have a profound respect for the catholic church, and very little sympathy with what protestants say against it. If protestantism did not mark a transition to something better, I should arrange myself with the catholics rather than with protestants. The catholic church had an important mission, that of civilizing the barbarian hordes which supplanted the Roman empire, of introducing a new order of civilization, and preparing the way for the second coming of our Lord; that is, for the introduction and establishment of a religious institution, Christian in reality as well as in name. Viewed in relation to this end, regarded merely as a provisional institution, which should in turn give way to a more perfect, as the Jewish had given way to it, I have no fault to find with catholicism, but am willing to recognise it as a true church. But at the epoch of the Reformation it had finished its work, fulfilled its mission, and since then it has been a mere cumberer of the ground. The three hundred years which have passed away since Luther, have been merely ages of doubt, criticism, inquiry, destruction, efforts to get rid of a superannuated institution and to elaborate a new one. Of this no wise man complains, for it has been inevitable. But the new institution is not yet found, nor has any one of the numerous sects now extant, its nucleus even. But I am

wandering from my point. Catholicism, excepting an impulse towards spirituality, which it received from Jesus, was in fact little else than a modification of the religions which preceded it. This is well known to some of your infidel writers, and is frequently urged as an objection to the truth of christianity. It may be an objection to what has passed for christianity, but it is no objection to that divine system of moral and religious truth which lay in the mind of Jesus.

"I mean not to say that what has passed for christianity has had no truth, nor indeed that it has contained no Christian truth. What I mean is, that the church has not been constructed after the Christian model. 'The truths borrowed from Jesus have not served as its foundation, but as the decoratiǒns of its altar, or have merely entered as polished stones and been lost in its walls.' The idea realized has not been the Christian idea; but in the main the Jewish idea. This has been the fundamental error of the church. The Christian world has not found its life and unity in the central idea of christianity, although it may have recognised that idea, and insisted on it with much sincerity and force.

"Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' and it has been thence inferred that he regarded this life only in its connexion with another, and had no desire to promote its well-being save as a means of securing the happiness of the life to

come. He therefore had no desire to favor social progress as such, and never sought man's earthly well-being as an end. In consequence of this misinterpretation of the words of Jesus, the social element of human nature, has never received the attention from the church it deserved. Understanding Jesus as concerning himself exclusively with the salvation of the soul in the world after death, and promulgating his religion on earth solely to secure that end, the church has contemned this world, pronounced it a vale of tears, a wretched land, and commanded us to look for happiness neither from it nor in it. The great office of religion has not been to teach us to live, but to die, — not to create a heaven on earth, but to enable us to endure suffering. There is nothing true but heaven. All here is mere illusion, unworthy a wish or a thought. All human pursuits are vain; earth is cursed for man's sake; and thistles and brambles only shall it bring forth to his labor. Seek merely to gain admittance into heaven. Heaven is the home of the soul. There all our toils will be over. There no more pain, no more fatigue, no more sickness, no more sorrow; but all one clear, unclouded noon of unutterable bliss. No matter what are the sufferings of this short and transitory life, they are not worthy to be compared with the exceeding weight of glory which awaits us in the life to come.

"In all this there is a truth, a great truth, but

not the whole truth. This life is not and cannot be exempt from suffering, and far be it from me to think lightly of the religion which seeks to make us patient under suffering, and which consoles us for present sorrows with the hope of joys to come. We all need consolations, a friendly hand to wipe the tears from our eyes, and to pour oil and wine into our wounded hearts. But then this world is God's world and is not to be contemned, and this life is God's gift and should therefore count for something, — cannot be mere illusion all. It is easy to account for the view which the church has taken of this world. The church grew up amid a dissolving world, when nothing seemed settled, when the earth seemed abandoned by its Maker, to the Devil and his angels. But the effects of this view have been none the less disastrous, because we are able to account for it. These effects have been to sink below its natural level the social element of christianity, to make the devout think meanly of whatever pertains to this mode of being, and to produce the conviction that the melioration of society as such is unnecessary if not even sinful. In this view of the office of religion, you see why it is that the church through all the stages of its existence has never labored directly for the progress of man's earthly well-being. It has indeed given alms and founded hospitals and asylums, for it has been charitable; it has sent out its missionaries to evangelize the world, for it has

been zealous, and filled with the spirit of propagandism; but it has sent out these missionaries expressly for the purpose of saving the soul hereafter, never for the purpose of diffusing the arts and blessings of civilization, albeit these have often followed.

"In all this I own the church has had a truth, a great truth, — perhaps the only truth past ages were able to appreciate, — but, as the church has interpreted it, by no means a peculiarly Christian truth, nor the truth demanded by the present. Christianity recognises the universal belief of mankind in a future life; it assumes always an hereafter; but it never makes it the principal object of man's life here to secure to his soul admission into heaven after death. It teaches us to prize the soul above the body; to seek the salvation of the soul; but not in the sense in which the church has alleged. Jesus would save the soul, not from future burnings, but from ignorance, low wants, grovelling propensities — in a word, from sinning. When he said his kingdom was not of this world, he spoke in reference to the world in which he appeared, and asserted that his kingdom, the order of things he came to introduce and everywhere build up, was to be based on other principles than were the kingdoms then existing. These kingdoms were established on the principle that might gives right; or at best on the idea of justice, as distinct from that of love. Their maxim

was, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, love to one's neighbor, but hatred to enemies,' — a maxim which at best could only create an eternal circle of injuries. But the kingdom of Jesus was to be based on the broad principle of absolute right, of universal philanthropy, a love for mankind, even for enemies, strong enough, if need be, to die for them on the scaffold or the cross. Those kingdoms were supported by the sword; his kingdom required the sword to remain in its scabbard, and commanded its subjects not to slay their enemies but to die for them. Jesus came to introduce a kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, — not an ecclesiastical kingdom, — a kingdom of righteousness, peace and love; to establish the reign of a new and a higher morality; but it was on the earth he sought to establish it. It was this world, the affairs, the minds and the hearts of men in this mode of being, he sought to subject to the law of God which is the law of right, which is again, the law of love. Hence the angels sang not only 'Glory to God in the highest,' but 'on earth peace and good will to men.'

"This great fact has been overlooked or misinterpreted; and yet it was of this fact that the wise and good of old prophesied. They saw the vice, the crime, the poverty, the suffering, the bigotry, the idolatry, the superstition, with which their own age was cursed, and they looked forth into the dim and distant future for a new order, a new age,

a new world to spring into birth. They saw in the visions of their souls, in the inspirations of their hopes, an individual, a chosen messenger, a prophet, priest, king, or hero, the anointed of God, the Messiah, by whom, in due time, this new order should be introduced, and the latter-day glory, for which they yearned and hoped, and must die without witnessing, should be realized. The utterance of their hopes and their wishes and their presentiments, in the sublime strains of inspired poetry, is what the church reverences, and rightly reverences as prophecy, and the authority of which, with equal justice, it has always asserted. These prophecies of a long line of patriarchs and sages, all point to the new world Jesus came to create, to the establishment of the reign of justice and love throughout all the earth. And I, for one, believe that they were from God and shall be realized. These patriarchs and sages read in the stars, which ever and anon broke through the clouds which obscured their heavens, that the night should not last forever, that a glorious morning should dawn, a golden sun uprise, before whose beams the darkness should roll back, and the clouds disperse. To me Jesus is that sun. His light has been rising for ages on our world, struggling with the darkness, and I doubt not that he will, ere long, shine forth in all his glory, the whole earth be illumined, and man everywhere be able to stand up in his true dignity, the brother of man, and the child of God.

This is the purport of all prophecy; and this realized, is the establishment of universal right, and the establishment of this, is the realization of the highest social perfection, as well as individual holiness.

"Man has suffered long; for ages been alienated from his brother man, the prey of false notions and anti-social habits. Long has he gone about bent to the earth, pale and haggard, bemoaning his existence, and at times, in the bitterness of his soul, cursing his Maker. Christianity comes to his relief. It brings a remedy; not merely by enjoining submission, patience, resignation; but by recognising his right to a better condition, and breathing into his soul, the courage which dare attempt its realization. Christianity, sir, deals with man's rights as well as with his duties. Nay, rightly interpreted, it concerns itself even more with our rights than with our duties, for even the duties it enjoins are but another name for the rights it recognises. It begins by recognising all men as brethren, — 'one is your Father in heaven and all ye are brethren,' — it proceeds by enjoining universal philanthropy, legitimated by the fact of the common brotherhood of the race; and ends by commanding us to labor especially for the poor, the friendless, the down-trodden. Jesus claimed to be the anointed of God, *because* he was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor. His ministry began with the poor, the lower classes; they

heard him gladly, while the rich scorned, and the great took counsel against him; from them were taken his chosen ministers, not learned scribes and rabbis, but poor unlettered fishermen, and humble tent-makers, — men who had nothing but their simple humanity, and therefore could be satisfied with nothing short of those broad and eternal principles of right, which extend alike to all the members of the race. The principles of the Gospel were broad enough to reach even them. Therefore 'blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' — *is*, not merely shall be in another world, but is now, for it is for their especial benefit the Son of God has come to introduce the reign of righteousness and love.

"You see now, Mr. Elwood, I hope, why it is I call christianity the poor man's religion. It is not because it comes with the voice of God to make him submissive to his masters; not because it seeks to reconcile him to an order of things, the whole weight of whieh he must bear; but because it comes to reveal to him his rights, his own lofty and deathless nature; his equality with those who have for ages trampled him in the dust, fattened on his sweat and blood; and to assure him that he also is a man, and has a man's wants, a man's rights, and energies; because it says to his oppressor in the tone and authority of God, Hold, thou wrongest a brother, and blasphemest thy Maker by oppressing his child; because it says to

the rich, the proud, the would-be nobility of earth, in the meanest, the lowest, the most filthy of the human race, Behold an equal, a brother, a child of God, humanity in all its integrity, with all its imprescriptible rights, and its capacity of endless progress in truth, love, goodness. Here, sir, is what I see in christianity, and seeing this, I could not be a Christian did I not recognise the rights of the poor, and feel my obligations to them; I could not for one moment find peace in my own bosom, did I not make the moral and social melioration of all the members of the community, the express object of all my thoughts, wishes, and labors. I hope, sir, you will no longer feel surprised to find a professed Christian sympathizing with efforts designed to promote man's earthly weal."

"You have presented me the Gospel," I replied, "in a new light; and had I seen it in the same light some years ago, it would have, perhaps, saved me some trouble, and reconciled me to the Christian faith. But what signifies it? You call yourself a Christian, but the whole Christian world will call you an infidel, and were you not rich would condemn you as loudly as it does me."

"Well, what of that? The first Christians were called atheists, and Jesus himself was crucified as a blasphemer, and I trust that I shall not be frightened by a nickname. The truth never yet was extinguished by a nickname, and if I have the truth, the world may call me what it will. But

there is no fear that my views will be termed infidelity. I have not stated *my* views only. Millions of hearts are there already to respond to them, and millions of voices ere long shall echo them. The Christian world is prepared for these views, and daily in the temple is it praying for them. Everywhere is there a Simeon to whose heart it has been revealed that he shall see the Lord's anointed, ready on beholding the Gospel in the light I have presented it, to exclaim, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'"

We had now reached Mr. Howard's residence and the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XV.

CONVALESCENCE.

Of Mr. Howard's family I shall not say much. It consisted of a wife and two daughters; the eldest daughter was eighteen, the other some two years younger, both intelligent, beautiful and religious, according to their father's reading of the Gospel. It was a quiet family, and in more respects than one, just the family in which the bruised spirit might be made whole, the chilled affections recover their warmth, and the troubled heart find its peace.

This family was cheerful, nay, lively; and the girls were now and then, as girls will be, a little frolicsome in a quiet way; but never, as I could discover, disposed to waste their time on trifles. Each had a regular employment, and each seemed to feel that life had serious aims which must not be lost sight of, and solemn duties which must not be neglected. Whether it was a fashionable or unfashionable family I cannot say, not being a judge of such matters. It was a wealthy family; but I never saw any display of

wealth. The house, furniture, and dress of the ladies, all seemed to me chaste, simple, and in good taste. Nothing was said about high and low; for the family did not belong to the class of *noveaux riches;* and the poor were never alluded to unless it were to have their rights explained and enforced, or their wants relieved. Mr. Howard, however, was no great advocate of almsgiving. In former times, he would say, when mere temporary relief was all that the most sanguine friends of mankind could hope to effect, almsgiving was a duty, and a virtue; but now we should aim at something higher, something which not merely palliates, but cures. Almsgiving is now often but a respectable way the rich have of displaying their wealth, or of excusing themselves from all serious efforts in behalf of the poor and needy. He wished not merely to relieve for a moment the wants of a few individuals, but to cure poverty itself, to abolish the distinction of rich and poor, believing with Agur, that neither riches nor poverty is best for man. But he did not seek to effect this object by giving to the poor, nor by seeking to do everything for them. The poor, he contended, were not poor because the rich wanted generosity, but justice. Nothing was needed for the poor but a simple reverence for the rights and dignity of man, as man. The great inequality in wealth which obtains results from the want of strict honesty in its acquisition, from the undue

advantages which individuals by their adroitness, or suppleness, and want of conscientiousness, have been able to secure to themselves, and from the want of high, moral feelings and a manly independence of spirit on the part of the poor. If every man would take with him, on commencing the pursuit of wealth, not conventional but true Christian morality, there would never be any inequality in wealth to be complained of; and consequently no poor to be commiserated, and no occasion for the display of generosity on the part of the rich. He did not ask the rich to give to the poor, but to respect the rights of the poor. For himself, he was rich; he had inherited the greater part of his wealth, and although he might question the strict morality of some of the means by which his estate had been originally acquired, he did not think it incumbent on him to throw it away; but to preserve it, and use it according to the best of his judgment for the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the community in which his lot had been cast.

I soon found myself quite domesticated in this agreeable family. I was not overloaded with kindness. I was in very feeble health, but no one tried to make me believe my health was feebler than it was. I had been unfortunate, but I heard no allusion to the fact, and no one attempted to console me. I was an infidel, but my unbelief elicited no remark, — was I not also a man?

Books, music, conversation, walks in the garden, short excursions to view some fine natural scenery in the neighborhood, afforded me ample means to recover my health and recruit my spirits.

Several weeks glided away uncounted, and I was evidently growing better. The world began to wear now and then a little sunshine, and to look less and less coldly upon me. Bright and laughing eyes were shining around me, but all the light did not come from them; — I had somewhat to remember. I was an inmate for the first time in my life in a family where I could see religion without bigotry, zeal without fanaticism, warmth of piety without superstition. I was surrounded by holy influences. The temper of my mind was rapidly changing, and old half-forgotten feelings would come up, and at times I felt as I did in that distant past when all things were bright and lovely to my view. Somehow or other the world did not seem to me so desolate as it did, and I could hardly persuade myself that some good being had not made it. Whence this disposition to return to my early faith? this new disposition to believe and worship? I had been honest, philanthropic; I had aimed well, I had inquired diligently, but might I not, after all, have mistaken my way? A new doubt this, not a doubt that leads to incredulity, but which may perhaps lead to something else.

There is nothing, I suppose, singular or novel

in this. There may be intellectual beings, who are moved by thought alone, — beings who never feel, but live always in mere abstractions. Such persons are dependent never on the state of the affections, and are influenced not at all by the circumstances around them. Of these beings I know not much. I am not one of them. I have believed myself to have a heart as well as a head, and that in me, what the authors of a new science I have just heard of, call the affective nature, is stronger, by several degrees, than the intellectual. The fact is my feelings have generally controlled my belief, not my belief my feelings. This is no uncommon case. As a general rule would you gain the reason you must first win the heart. This is the secret of most conversions. There is no logic like love. And by-the-by, I believe that the heart is not only often stronger than the head, but in general a safer guide to truth. At any rate, I have never found it difficult to assign plenty of good reasons for doing what my heart has prompted me to do. Mr. Howard understood all this perfectly, and uniformly practised on the principle here implied, not as a calculation, but because he was led to it by the benevolence of his own heart. He found me out of humor with myself and the world, suffering acute mental torture, and he saw at once that I must be reconciled to myself and the world, before I could look upon christianity in the proper frame of mind to judge

of its truth and beauty. Then again he was not extremely anxious to convert me. He did not regard me in my present condition as an alien from God, or as deserving to be an outcast from man. To him I was a man, a brother, a child of God. If I had been unable to come to the same belief he had, it might be my loss, but could not be my fault. He would gladly see me a believer, but he thought probably the influence of Christian example, and above all, communion with truly Christian dispositions, would go farther than any arguments addressed merely to my understanding towards making me one.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PARADOX.

As I began to recover the tone of my mind, and to look with a less jaundiced eye upon the world, my infidelity became a frequent subject of conversation. One evening, while we were conversing, I remarked to Mr. Howard, that since I had been in his family, I had been almost persuaded to become a Christian.

"Perhaps," he replied, "you are, and always have been, much nearer being a Christian than you imagine."

"But I can hardly be a Christian without knowing it."

"I am not so sure of that. Christianity is not a creed, but a life. He who has the spirit of Jesus is a Christian, be his speculative belief what it may."

"I have not as yet advanced far enough to admit even the existence of a God. I see not then how I can have much of Christ in me."

"Christ is not a dogma to be believed, but a spirit to be cultivated and obeyed. Whoever loves

truth and goodness, and is willing to die for their honor and the redemption of man, as Jesus did, I hold to be a Christian in the only worthy sense of the term. He may not indeed have the 'letter' which 'killeth,' but that is no great loss, so long as he has the 'spirit' which 'giveth life.'"

"You seem determined to make me out a Christian, and that too without changing my faith."

"The belief in Christ lies in the bottom of every honest man's heart. Christianity is nothing foreign to our soul. It is the ideal, the realization of which would constitute the perfection of our nature. Just so far as you advance in the work of perfecting your own nature, do you grow in Christ; and could you attain to the highest perfection admitted by your nature as a man, you would attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. In yielding obedience to the moral laws of your own being, you are yielding obedience to the Gospel. One of these laws, the one which I term the social element of human nature, you obeyed in your efforts to reform society and augment the sum of the common weal of your kind. Consequently in obeying this element, you were conforming to the Christian law. You fancied you were obeying a law of infidelity, but that was an error of judgment, easily accounted for. You saw that element generally overlooked or discarded by the Christian world; you therefore inferred that it could not be an element of Christianity; and you

rejected christianity because you supposed it rejected this element. But had you seen that christianity recognised this element as its great, its central law, you would not have thought of rejecting it."

"But I was an unbeliever long before I ever dreamed of turning social reformer."

"Very possibly; but still for a Christian reason. All the infidelity I have ever met with springs from one of two causes acting separately, or from both combined. The first cause of infidelity I have already spoken of. Some men feel a strong desire to redress social or political grievances, and are repulsed by the church. They therefore imagine the church opposed to political freedom, and social progress; and identifying christianity with the church, they disown it, and very properly. The second cause of infidelity is found in the development of the philosophical element of our nature. This element is strong in some men. They must be free to inquire what and wherefore they believe. This inquiry the church has prohibited; they have therefore concluded it prohibited by christianity itself; and therefore have rejected christianity; and I add again, very properly. In both of these cases the supposed rejection of christianity has been induced by Christian motives; and the infidel could not have been, with his lights, a Christian, had he done differently."

"You seem, sir, disposed to attribute infidelity to good causes and not to bad."

"Certainly. I have long since learned to hold myself ignorant of the real causes of a man's opinions, till I have been able to trace them to a good, even a sacred source. Infidelity indicates an inquiring mind, an honest mind, not a depraved heart. It originates in what is good in the individual, and is disgraceful only to the church which has given occasion for it. Instead then of censuring infidels, denouncing them in the name of God, and trying to set the community against them, I look into the church to ascertain, if I can, its errors or defects which justify infidelity. Christians, not infidels, are to be denounced if any are."

"But, sir, will the church suffer you to make such assertions? Will it not denounce you as well as me?"

"I am not much in the habit of asking permission of the church to say this or that, and if it choose to denounce me, all I have to say is, I will denounce it; and I am sure it will regard my denunciation of it, as much as I shall its denunciation of me."

"Every man who believes christianity and knows why he believes it, has at some period of his life doubted it. Authority and tradition may answer the wants of the multitude, but there are those who must not only know what they believe, but wherefore they believe. In these men the

philosophical element is active. They ask, why do we believe christianity? What are the grounds for believing it? When they ask this question, they have no thought of doubting, far less of disbelieving. They are honest, but they have a craving to comprehend that faith they have hitherto taken on trust. But when they begin this questioning they are necessarily ignorant, and doubt is the inevitable result.

"Doubt, although in itself free from sin, is a critical matter. I am far from pretending that we may doubt without danger. There is always danger in cutting loose from our old fastenings, and going forth upon an unknown sea, while as yet unskilled in navigation. There is always danger, that when we doubt the truth of the creed in which we have been reared, we shall make our doubt an excuse for disregarding all moral restraints, and for the indulgence of all our baser propensities; there is also danger that we shall be too hasty, and rush too precipitately from mere doubt to dogmatic infidelity; nevertheless, the hazard here implied we must run, unless we would be forever in leading-strings.

"Doubt itself has no necessary connexion with infidelity, or the rejection of christianity. We can never attain to a rational faith in christianity without passing through the wilderness of doubt; but the natural result of doubt would be conviction, not disbelief; that is, where it runs a free

course. But unhappily it is not suffered to run this free course. It is almost always obstructed. Nearly the whole Christian world condemns it, pronounces it a sin, the effect of a depraved heart or a lawless will,—unchurches, anathematizes the trembling doubter, and assures him, that if he continues to doubt he shall be damned not only here but hereafter.

"From this fact results one of two consequences. If the want to account to oneself for his faith, and to see clearly the grounds of its truth, be but moderate, the doubter stifles his doubts, sinks back under the dominion of authority and tradition, assents to whatever the church enjoins, and remains henceforth destitute of all real spiritual life, a dead weight on the cause of Christ, and a disgrace to humanity. Such, I fear, are at the present moment, a majority of the members of our churches. These are they who are loudest against the infidel, and the most ready to anathematize all freedom of mind. Poor creatures! having no reason themselves to give for the faith they avow, they fancy none can be given. On the other hand, if the want of which I speak be very urgent, that is, if the philosophical element of our nature be very strong and active, the obstacles which our doubts encounter, enrage us, make us mad at the church for its unreasonableness, and drive us into infidelity. I think your own experience will bear me out in what I say.

"When you first asked yourself why you believed christianity, nothing was further from your thoughts than its rejection. You were young, You had not, and you could not have had, at that age, the necessary acquaintance either with human nature or the Gospel, to be able to assign rational grounds for believing christianity. You doubted, because you wanted evidence to convince, and that evidence you were not then in a state to receive. If your Christian friends had encouraged you to doubt, told you that it was your duty to doubt till you should attain to rational conviction; if they had exhorted you to push your investigations into all subjects, sacred or profane, and bid you abide by the result of your investigations, be that result what it might, you would never have ranked yourself among unbelievers, but would have long ere this attained to a well-grounded faith in God, Christ, and immortality.

"But your friends I will venture to say were not wise enough for this. They told you these doubts were sinful, were from the Devil, and you must stifle them. They undertook to frighten you. They talked to you of death and the judgment, told you long raw-head-and-bloody-bones stories about the death-bed, of noted unbelievers, and with cant and rigmarole, if not direct abuse and denunciation, sought to win you back to the church. Poor fools! They took the very course to make you disgusted with religion and ambitious to be-

come an infidel. Firmly as I believe in God, Christ, and immortality, I confess, I rarely meet with a work written in defence of christianity, that does not stir the devil in me, and make me ready to renew the old war of the Titans upon the Gods. If the Gods cannot employ more respectable advocates than they have hitherto done, I think it were no mean honor to be sent to hell for giving judgment against them. Happily, however, we are not dependent on their feed advocates, nor the witnesses they summon. Let God alone, and he will plead his own cause, and for witnesses, — we have a witness within worth all others.

"But this by the way. The philosophical element in you was strong and active. You must have a reason for the faith you avowed. That element the church disowned and would not suffer you to obey. But the infidel owned it and bid you obey it. You sided then with the infidel against the church, that you might be free to philosophize; in other words, that you might be at liberty to exercise your mind freely upon all subjects you should judge worthy of your examination. You became an infidel for the same reason that Luther became a protestant. Luther became a protestant not because he objected to the creed of the catholic church, but because he would not submit to the authority of the Pope. So you rejected christianity not because you had found its doctrines untrue, but because the church in its name

asserted an authority over your faith which you deemed unwarrantable and mischievous."

"But I think my inquiries proved that the supernatural pretensions of christianity were unfounded."

"I care nothing for your inquiries, — asking your pardon, sir ; for they came afterwards. The reasons you may have alleged for disbelieving christianity were not the reasons which induced you to disbelieve it ; but, reasons which you raked together afterwards to justify your disbelief."

"But this philosophical element of which you speak, do you mean to assert that it is a Christian element ?"

"Of course I do."

CHAPTER XVII.

RATIONALISM.

"PHILOSOPHY has a place in the history of mankind, and must therefore result from a want inherent in our nature. Men do not philosophize through mere caprice, but in obedience to an indestructible law of human nature. All men feel more or less strongly the want of comprehending, accounting for, and verifying their beliefs. This want is what I term the philosophical element of human nature.

"Christianity is the name I give to the law of man's perfection. The design of Jesus was to make us perfect men. He did not propose to perfect us by changing our natures, converting us into a different sort of being; but by developing our nature, by calling forth in their legitimate order and stimulating to their highest activity all the faculties with which we were originally endowed by our Creator. If the religious and ethical system he has proposed to this end, be narrower than human nature, if it leave out of its account any one element of that nature, it cannot secure the

perfection contemplated. Could it then be proved that christianity neglects or prohibits the exercise of the philosophical element, I would discard it as quick as if it neglected the religious element, properly so called.

"Christianity addresses itself to me as a being endowed with reason. It presupposes me capable of knowing and comprehending. It makes its appeal not to my senses, but to my reason. If then it should begin by denying my right to exercise my reason, which is virtually denying the reason itself, it would leave no reason to respond to its appeal. It is the reason that must pronounce upon its truth or falsity; but if we deny both the right and the competency of the reason to do this, we can never have any grounds for believing christianity true or false, consequently no reason whatever for feeling ourselves obliged to obey it. Religion can dispense with reason, no better than philosophy can, for reason is its only interpreter and voucher."

"The Bible, I have supposed, commands us not to reason, but to believe, and assures us that we shall be damned if we do not."

"The Bible never threatens damnation as the punishment of disbelief, as such. But in relation to the language of the Bible on this and many other topics, there is, I apprehend, some slight mistake. Before you can rightly interpret the Bible you must take its authors' point of sight.

You, as well as many Christians, give to nature a causative power, an independent activity. If you believed in God, you would never think of ascribing to his agency what you could trace to the operation of what you term natural laws. In fact the Christian world is at present prone to restrict the sphere of the Divine activity, and to introduce the '*Deus ex Machinâ*' only when the powers of nature prove to be inadequate.

"But this is all wrong. Nature has no independent activity, no causality of its own. God is the only independent existence, and he is the cause of all causes. The laws of nature are his will. Truth is not one thing and God another; right is not one thing and God another. You admit that you ought to believe the truth, and to do what is right. Then you admit, if you understand yourself, that you are bound to believe what God commands, and to do what he ordains. To say a thing is commanded by God, is precisely the same thing it is to say that it is true, it is right. God commands it; the right enjoins it; it is right; are merely three different modes of expressing, one and the same thing.

"Now the authors of the Bible always take this view, and regard God as the absolute sovereign of the universe, whose will is law,—consequently they promulgate all particular truths in the form of commands. God commands us to do this, not to do that; ordains that do this and ye shall live,

do that and ye shall die. Now this form of speaking is strictly just, and implies no more restriction on mental freedom than does the more common form of saying, this is true, and therefore ought to be believed; this is right, and therefore ought to be done. God is everlasting and immutable right, eternal and unalterable truth. His words then are in the highest and strictest sense commands. He who utters a truth promulgates a command of God; he who points out a right or a duty declares a law of God, and has a right to say, thus God wills, thus saith the Lord. Be sure that what you utter is true, is right, and you are authorized to proclaim it as the command of God, and to demand in the name of God obedience. The Bible-writers then make no war upon the rights of the mind, when they utter the truths they behold in the form of commands. All truth is authoritative, — a Divine command, and whoso rebels against it, rebels against his legitimate sovereign."

"But does the Bible do what you seem to imply? Does it never proclaim anything but the truth?"

"That is, are its words, the words of God; are its commands always the commands of truth? That is a subject for the human mind to determine. So far as it speaks truth, I contend it has the right to say, 'thus saith the Lord,' 'so God commands.' Our business is to ascertain what it really promulgates as the commands of God, and then if what

it promulgates be really the commands of God, that is, true."

"But are you at liberty to make both of these inquiries? Will christianity suffer you to do it?"

"If it would not, I would not suffer myself to be one of its advocates. I have no confidence in any system of faith or of morals that shrinks from investigation. Not truth but falsehood shuns the light."

"But we are told that the Bible is the word of God, and therefore we must receive it blindly, implicitly."

"I rarely ask what I am told; I ask what is true. Be it that I am told that the Bible is the word of God, just so far as I find it true, I will admit it to be the word of God, but no further."

"Do you discriminate? The Bible is a whole, and as a whole is to be taken or rejected. They say we must believe what is in the Bible, because it is in the Bible, not because independently of the Bible, we have ascertained it to be true."

"*They say!* No more of that. I believe a proposition because I discover, or fancy I discover it to be true, not because I find it in one book or another; and I obey a command because I believe it just, not because it emanates from one source or another."

"But how do you determine whether a given proposition be true or false,—a given command be just or unjust?"

"By the reason with which I am endowed, freely developed and conscientiously directed."

"We are back where we were. Does christianity allow you to do this?"

"No, it does not *allow* me to do it; but commands me, makes it my duty to do it. 'Why,' says Jesus to the Jews and through them to all men, 'why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' 'If I do not the works of my Father believe me not.' Here is a distinct recognition of a power in man to judge what is and what is not right, and what are and what are not the works of God, together with a call upon us to exercise this power. If we have the power to determine what are the works of God, we of course have the power to determine what is true or false. And this power it is our duty to exercise."

"The church will dissent from your interpretation."

"And I, sir, will in that case dissent from the church. I am no believer in the infallibility of the church. The church has always misinterpreted the authority of truth. She has ever had a profound sentiment of the authoritativeness of truth, that every man is bound to believe and obey the truth; that no man can knowingly disregard the truth and be guiltless. So far she has been right. But on this she has built up a system of ecclesiastical tyranny which it behooves every wise man to protest against. She has first as-

sumed that she has the truth, identified her teachings with the teachings of God, and then claimed for herself the authority which belongs only to truth — to God. Now between the church and absolute truth there may be a distance, and her practice of claiming for herself what belongs of right to truth, is founded on a species of logic I am by no means disposed to admit.

"I admit the absolute authority of God, and of course of truth, since I hold truth to be one with God. Show me the truth, and I own my obligation to submit to it. But I deny that the church has any more authority to interpret truth, and declare the will of God than I have. I make no war upon the church because it has asserted the principle of authority, for I contend as strongly as she does for that principle. Her error consists in placing that principle where it does not belong, in claiming it for an individual or a corporation that has no right to it. I deny the legitimacy of all merely human government. God alone is sovereign. No power is legitimate that is not ordained of God. But when the church commands me to believe this or that she speaks in her own name, and substitutes a human authority for that of God. Here is her grand error. It was this assumption on the part of the catholic church that provoked the protest of the Reformers in the sixteenth century; it is this assumption on the part of all protestant churches now that leads to the pro-

test of modern infidelity against all religion. And so long as the church continues to make this assumption, I will hold her accountable for all the infidelity which obtains.

"Of all tyrannies ecclesiastical tyranny is the worst, because it penetrates to the soul, and binds the conscience as well as the body. It makes man a slave within as well as without, and therefore utterly a slave. You may bind my body, you may task the motions of my limbs, but I am still a man if my soul be free, if my thoughts be not curbed, and my conscience itself fettered. In all ages the priesthood have established this tyranny, and they everywhere struggle with all their might to retain it. Even those of our clergy who fancy themselves the advocates of religious freedom still cling in principle and in fact to this same tyranny. They indeed protest against the authority of Rome, but they set up a written word for which they claim equal authority. They war against the hierarchy, but they claim infallibility for the congregation. The greatest extent to which their love of liberty will carry them, is freedom from all civil restraints in matters of religious worship. But this is no more than Rome always contended for. This was the principle involved in the long struggle between the popes and the emperors. The church claimed for religion freedom, entire freedom from the restraints of the civil power. But she by no means allowed the individual freedom from the restrictions

of the ecclesiastical power. Nor do the modern clerical advocates of religious liberty in our own country. With us each church has its creed, expressed or implied, conformity to which constitutes the Christian character. The Calvinistic clergyman is no more free in the full and enlarged sense of the term than is the Romish priest. In our own country I presume few can be found who would impose civil restrictions on religious belief; yet there are still fewer, claiming to be religious, who would leave the individual free to form his own creed, and to abide by his own honest convictions of the truth."

"Do you then claim for the individual reason the right to interpret the word of God?"

"I do, and more than is commonly implied in the remark. I not only claim for the individual reason the right to interpret the Bible, which is commonly meant, but the whole word of God, whether written or unwritten; that is, the right to decide in all cases whatever, what I am to embrace as truth. But of course I hold that I am to use my reason reasonably. In determining what is truth, I am to survey the whole proposition, and to avail myself of all the aid I can. I am not to confine myself to my own consciousness, to my own experience; but must interrogate the consciousness, the experience of the race, so as to come as near as possible, by means of my individual reason, to the decisions of the universal reason, of which my reason is a fragment. In this inquiry,

the Bible as being the most authentic record of the experience of the race, or of the teachings of the universal reason, or what is the same thing,—the revelations of God, becomes to me of the greatest possible value, and my surest guide."

"I can only say that, though I object nothing to your doctrine, I apprehend the Christian world will no more own you than it would me."

"As to that I shall not trouble myself. I believe I see very clearly the signs of the times. Men are not precisely what they were. Knowledge is no longer the exclusive property of the clergy. The laity have been to school, and are going to school; and it is shrewdly suspected by some that there is no especial virtue in the imposition of hands, or in gown and band, to enable one to see and know the truth. It is beginning to be believed that humanity in all its integrity, is in every member of the race, that each member therefore has the right and the power to form his own creed. The church may war against this new state of things, but she will by so doing only hasten the day of her dissolution. The human race is already escaping from her dominion. It demands a reason, and she must give it, or be discarded. She must recognise the authority of pure reason in matters of religion as well as natural science, or she will go the way of all the earth. I say this in no Titanic spirit, but with a deep respect for the church, and an earnest wish for her future glory."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PREACHER.

The day following the conversation I have just related, was Sunday, and Mr. Howard for the first time invited me to accompany him to his meeting. He remarked that his minister, though pretty orthodox in the main, was a little peculiar, and perhaps I should find myself interested, if not edified. Years had elapsed since I had entered a place of religious worship, and though I felt no great desire on my part to hear a sermon, yet as I thought I might please Mr. Howard by going, I accepted his invitation.

The place of meeting was a public hall capable of holding some eight or nine hundred persons, and I found it well filled with a plain, sensible-looking congregation, whose earnest countenances indicated that they were there not because it was a place of fashionable resort, but because they were serious worshippers and honest inquirers after truth. A single glance told you that they were bold, earnest minds, who could look truth steadily in the face, let her assume what shape she might.

The preacher, a Mr. Morton, was a tall, well-

proportioned man, with something a little rustic in his appearance, indicating that his life had not been spent in the circles of the gay and the fashionable. Though far from being handsome, his features were striking and impressed themselves indelibly upon the memory. His dark complexion, and small, restless black eye bespoke an active and also an irritable disposition, and assured you that he might say some bitter things. His head was large, and his brow elevated and expanded. His face bore the marks of past struggle, whether with passion, the world, or sorrow, it was not easy to say. He was apparently under forty years of age, but you felt that he was a man who could speak from experience, that he was in fact no ordinary man, but one who had a biography, if you could only get at it. There was something almost repulsive about him, and yet you were drawn insensibly towards him.

On commencing his discourse he seemed not exactly at his ease, and his address was hurried, and ungraceful. His voice, too, though deep-toned, grated harshly on the ear, and produced a most unfavorable impression. But there was an air of earnestness about him, an evidence of intellectual vigor, and of moral honesty, which arrested your attention; while the novelty of his views and the boldness of his language served to enchain it till he closed. His discourse was to me a most singular production. I had never heard such a ser-

mon before; and I confess I listened to it with the deepest interest. As a copy of it subsequently came into my hands, I will here give it word for word as he delivered it, although I am aware that it can hardly make the same impression upon my readers that it did upon me. But to the sermon.

"But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.—GAL. i. 11, 12."

The declaration of Paul in these words is worthy of grave consideration. There is more in it than at first sight meets the eye.

Paul, you are aware, had much trouble with his brother believers. Many, a large portion of the Jewish, or as we should say to-day, orthodox believers in christianity, looked upon him as unsound in the faith, and as one who might do mischief. They no doubt held him to be honest, probably admired his zeal, and did homage to the earnestness and singleness of purpose with which he gave himself up to the great work of diffusing christianity as he understood it; but then they feared that his boldness, his rashness, the freedom of his speculations, might compromit the Gospel, and secure its enemies a triumph. Hence wherever he went, they followed him, scattering doubts as to his orthodoxy, warning the people not to listen to him, and laboring to secure the adoption

of certain notions, or the observance of certain rites or ceremonies which he declared to be unessential or inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was to defend himself from the charges preferred by these orthodox opponents of his, to rebuke them for their folly or ignorance, and to recall his Galatian brethren to the simplicity, truth, and freedom of the Gospel, that he wrote this epistle, from which I have taken my text; and he alleges as his defence the fact that the Gospel he was preaching, he did not receive from men, nor was he taught it by men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul had come to Christianity through the free action of his own mind, and had embraced it because convinced of its truth. He had opposed it, but not on account of that for which others embraced it, but on account of something which they probably did not see.

The early believers in christianity were Jews. But in believing christianity they did not consider themselves as rejecting judaism. They held on to the law of Moses after believing in Christ as firmly as they did before. They saw nothing in christianity which required them to abandon their previous religious notions or observances. They saw no inconsistency in swearing by both Moses and Christ.

Paul, however, was too keen-sighted, and pos-

sessed too logical a mind, to fall into this mistake. He saw from the first that if Christ should increase Moses must decrease. The prevalence of the new religion was incompatible with the existence of the old. This was doubtless the secret of his hostility to christianity. Bred a Jew, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, he very naturally believed the Jewish religion, even to its letter, was of divine authority. How could he then regard with indifference the prevalence of a heresy which struck at the very existence of the whole Jewish economy, and which, if not checked, must change the whole religious faith and practice of his countrymen? He opposed christianity then, because it was directly opposed to the religion he believed to be from God.

When he became converted to christianity, he did not hesitate to avow it, and to engage with the whole ardor of his soul in the defence of his new faith. But in becoming converted to christianity, he did not become convinced that it and judaism were one and the same thing. He recognised the same opposition between them now that he did before. He believed now as he did before that judaism and christianity were in the main two distinct religions, and could never be made to harmonize together. He therefore rejected judaism now as he had christianity before. Consequently he saw that those Christians who still clung to the

Jewish law, and the traditions of the fathers, had but a partial view of the Gospel, and were in fact deceiving themselves and seeking justification by conforming to a law by the deeds of which no flesh could be justified. He wished them to be Christians, not Jews; to rely on Christ, not on Moses; on the spirit, not on the flesh; on grace, not on works; for to attempt to seek justification by the Jewish law was mere folly. Hence the cause and the nature of the controversy with them in which he was engaged. They rejoiced no doubt to find him converted from a bitter opponent to a zealous defender of the new faith; they were no doubt highly delighted that he gave his powerful aid to the Christian cause; but then why need he oppose judaism? Why need he be so belligerent, and oppose so strenuously the traditions and usages they held sacred?

The case of Paul is by no means a singular one. Let a man in these days, and in this community come to a belief in christianity through infidelity, and after having long opposed it, and he will find that his case is very much the same. He will inevitably embrace christianity in a shape somewhat different from that most approved by the doctors of the church. 'Christianity, according to their reading, had failed to satisfy him.' He had seen, what perhaps none of them had seen, that christianity, according to their interpretations, was inconsistent with itself, that it opposed or neglected

some essential element of truth, and therefore deserved to be rejected. But in his lone inquiries, in his silent meditations, in his secret interviews with the Egeria of his soul, the spirit of truth, he has become convinced that christianity, rightly interpreted, is true, is from God. The scales fall from his eyes, and he is exalted in his soul to the third heaven, where he converses with Jesus and holds fellowship with the Father. His views are clear and definite; his soul is fired with a holy zeal; and he goes forth with a kindling enthusiasm to proclaim the glad tidings of his new faith. He is indefatigable in his labors, doing more in a week than the sleek doctors of the church in years. All rejoice in the new convert; all hail the energy with which he goes to his work, the fervor with which he prays, and the unction with which he preaches.

But this man, though converted to christianity, has not been converted to the traditions of the fathers, nor does he defend them. He has been converted to a christianity freed from the defects and inconsistences which he had found in the christianity of the doctors, and which had driven him to infidelity. He is converted to Christ, not to Moses, — preaches christianity, not judaism. Forthwith a clamor is raised against him. He may be honest, it is said, may speak with power, may labor abundantly, may wish to do good, and even fancy that he is doing good; but he is too

rash, too bold; he does not see to what some of his assertions lead; he does not pay respect enough to the usage of the churches; and we are afraid that he will unsettle the faith of many, breed disorder and do great harm to the holy cause of religion.

Let this man go where he will, let him labor with all zeal, diligence and fidelity, let him wear out his body in the intense activity of his mind, stand alone, forego most of the kindly charities and sympathies of civilized life, suffer poverty and want, and he shall find his christian brethren everywhere, and always the first to oppose him, diligent to throw suspicion on the worth of his labors, and to warn the people neither to believe him nor to listen to his words. And all the while they shall profess to have a generous concern for his welfare, to wish him well, and to be very sorry that he will ruin himself by his rashness, and his wild speculations. It is a great pity that he cannot be a little more prudent, and not be ever saying things which cannot but alienate from him his best friends.

Here comes in Paul's defence. Brethren, I profess and preach to you the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but I certify you that I did not receive it of men, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is no human device. Man has not made it, man does not own it; man has no right to authorize it nor to impose

it; nor to say how it shall or shall not be preached. It is from God, and it is the duty of every one to whom Jesus Christ reveals it, to preach it as he has received it, and that too without conferring with flesh and blood.

If we recur more particularly to this defence, we shall find that it contains several propositions of which we shall do well not to lose sight.

"I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, — or by me, — is not after man."

The meaning of this, I apprehend, is that he did not preach to them a Gospel which men had authorized him to preach. Grant, he would say, that the Gospel I preached unto you was in some, yea in all respects different from that which others preach unto you, what then? I came not to you as the envoy of men, nor of any particular class or set of men. I never entered into any engagement to preach other men's Gospels, or to preach to you what others, who regard themselves as the followers of Jesus, may preach to you, or contend ought to be preached. Men have no authority over my Gospel, to dictate to me what I shall preach; and I preach not because believers have authorized or ordained and sent me forth to preach. I stand on my own feet, speak for myself, and hold myself accountable to no human tribunal for the doctrines I teach. If then I teach not what others profess to believe, or con-

tend ought to be believed; if I entertain not the traditions of the elders and support not all the usages of the fathers, the congregations of believers have no right to call me to an account. I am not their agent; I speak not in their name, and whether I agree with them or not, is a matter of no moment.

In this Paul evidently sets aside the doctrine of ordination. It has been supposed that every preacher must by a solemn act of ordination receive authority to teach. When the church has ordained him, he goes out in the name of the church, which is responsible for his doctrines, and to which he must hold himself responsible in return. Hence the jurisdiction the church has claimed over its preachers, and the right to which it has pretended, of trying them for heresy, and of suspending them from their ministry. But all this is wrong. No man, no body of men can give me or any one else, authority to teach. Every true preacher of the Gospel goes forth on his own responsibility, and speaks as God gives him utterance, without being amenable therefor to any earthly tribunal, whether termed civil or ecclesiastical. Men have no business to call him to an account for what he utters, the church has no right to try him for heresy, or to suspend him from his ministry, however obnoxious to its displeasure may be the doctrines he sets forth. Grant that he departs from the traditions of the elders, from the

usages of the fathers, and does not adopt the reading of learned and reverend doctors, they have nothing to do with him, but to convince him by arguments addressed to his reason and conscience, that he is wrong.

Paul also asserts that he did not receive the Gospel he preached, from men, nor was he taught it by men. He had not learned the Gospel he was preaching from the brethren who were accusing him. They had not been his masters, and he therefore was under no obligation to them. He had not studied with the Apostles, he had not taken from them even the formula of his faith; but had retired into Arabia, and not until after three years of solitary study, of communion with himself and with God, had he undertaken to preach. It was not then as a pupil of the Apostles, but as a brother apostle, standing on equal ground with the immediate disciples of Jesus themselves, that he came forward as the preacher of the Gospel. He stood up a free and independent man, to utter the words God gave him to utter, and without referring to the words uttered by others or asking whether his harmonized with theirs or not. He felt that he had as much right to call the immediate disciples of Jesus to an account as they him. In a word, he was preaching on his own hook, what he had learned of God to believe.

He was taught by Jesus Christ, who was acknowledged by all as an authoritative teacher.

Jesus Christ was ultimate, the highest possible authority, in the estimation of all believers; Paul then in claiming to have been taught by Jesus Christ, claimed to have received the Gospel he preached from the highest possible authority. In claiming this he claimed to have drawn his doctrines from the primal source of truth. Grant, then, that he differed from his brethren; the error was as likely to be on their side as on his. Grant that he condemned judaism as insufficient to wash out guilt and raise the soul to union with God; he might, nevertheless, be even a more consistent Christian than they who upheld it, and suffered no departure from the traditions of the elders.

I have called your attention to this profession of Paul, of having been taught but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, for another purpose than that of showing you how he defended himself from the charges brought against him. I think I see in it something which was not merely local and temporary, but which belongs to all times and to all individuals. I think I see here the recognition of the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be learned of men. The immediate disciples of Jesus could have taught it if any body could; but Paul would not go and study even with them. He would not take the Gospel at second hand. He would go to the primal source and receive it on as high authority as that possessed by the personal followers of Jesus, — would go to the master and

not to the disciple. Every one should do the same to-day. Every one should draw from the original fountain, take Jesus Christ and none other for his instructer.

Thus far I suppose all will agree to what I say. But I pray you observe that when they send us to Christ, to the original fountain, it is to the Bible they send us. I speak with all becoming reverence of the Bible; but you must own to me that the Bible, the written Word, as we possess it now, is not an authority so high as that possessed by the oral teachings of the immediate followers of Jesus. You would esteem the instructions which Peter, James and John, were they here to-day, could furnish you, of higher authority than the mere record of their past instructions you read in the Bible. If they were here, and you should discover a discrepancy between their teachings and the New Testament, you would rely on the former rather than on the latter. Then the instructions which Paul might have received from the immediate disciples of Jesus, were more ultimate than those which we can gather from the New Testament. But even the instructions of these immediate disciples were not ultimate enough for him. He would not learn even of them. He would go to Jesus Christ himself, and learn of the master. Now the Bible is the work, not of the master, but of the disciple; how then can sending us to the Bible be sending us to Jesus Christ, to the Master?

The New Testament is a record which has come down to us of the teachings of the disciples; or if you please, a record which the disciples have left us of the teachings of their Master; but we can conceive something more ultimate still; to wit, the original instructions themselves. Those instructions could you obtain them, you would value more than any record it would be possible to make of them. There is then, or there once was, a higher source of truth than the Bible. Paul held the disciples themselves not high enough. He would go above them, and learn from their Master, and is there any more reason why I should regard the Bible as high enough, than there was that he should count their instructions high enough? Why should not I as well as Paul go above the Bible, to the very source from which the Bible-makers themselves drew? Do I learn of Christ when I merely learn of the Bible, any more than Paul would have learned of him, had he taken only the lessons of the disciples?

But I may be told that Jesus Christ instructed Paul, as well as the other disciples, so that he might have another apostle to send forth into the field; and that since Paul evidently drew his instructions from the highest source, we should be content to learn of him. I am not satisfied with this. I know I am a sinner; but I do not know what I have done that I should not have as good evidence for my faith as Paul had for his: nor

why I should not have as able instructers as he had. I know not wherefore Paul should have had Jesus for his instructer, and I only have certain Letters Paul is said to have written for mine. Why such partiality? Am not I also a man? Am not I born as he was? Is not my nature as good as his was? Do I not stand in as much need of instruction as he did? Why then send him to the Master, and turn me off with the Disciple?

Shall I be told that there was once indeed, a source of divine knowledge more original than the Bible, that then Jesus Christ was on earth, and his immediate instructions might be obtained; but that now all is changed, and we must receive our instructions from the written Word only? I do not understand this. Is there not a Jesus Christ now as much as there was in the time of Paul? Was Jesus Christ any more accessible to Paul than he is to me? Beware how you answer these questions, lest you be found denying the resurrection. To say there was a Jesus Christ, but is not now, is only another form of denying the Lord that bought us. You might in that case believe, indeed, in a Saviour for Paul, but in none for me. But Paul himself teaches you better than this. He tells you not to say within yourselves, "Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above: or who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. The word is nigh thee, even in

thy mouth, and in thy heart." Christ is not dead, but ever living, — not off in some distant world, but ever present, ever abiding with us, and ever saying unto us, "Learn of me," for "lo I am with you unto the end of the world."

Most people, I apprehend, fancy that all supernatural revelations from God have ceased, and that Christ teaches now only through the medium of the written Word. But are they aware, that to believe so is as good as to deny both God and Christ? To say that God has discontinued his revelations to man, is only saying in other words, that all intercourse between him and us, is broken off; which is virtually saying that we are without God; at least that there is for us no living God, but only a God that was, but is not. A God that was but is not, is no God at all. To say that there was a Christ who taught men, but is not now, is to assert merely a dead Christ not a living, — is in fact to deny the resurrection.

There is an error quite prevalent, even among religious people, that of believing only in a Divinity which was, but is not. All admit that God made the world; very few that he makes it. After having spent a whole eternity in the contemplation of himself, it is supposed that some six thousand years ago, he spoke the universe into existence with all its furniture of worlds and beings, impressed upon it its laws, wound it up as the clockmaker does his clock, gave the pendulum a

jog, set it a-going, and then left it to go of itself. Just as though the universe could subsist a moment if the Deity, as its cause, did not remain in it, its life and substance, and motion! So though they admit that God has once and a while concerned himself with the piece of mechanism he had constructed, and condescended to give a few directions for its management, yet it was all in the past, long ages ago. No interference now, no God to reveal himself to us, who stand so much in need of his instructions. So also they admit that a Saviour once appeared in Judea, was crucified under Pontius Pilate for the redemption of the world, but there is no Jesus Christ now. The Saviour did not rise from the dead, and there is only a traditional Christ in which we may trust. How has the age lapsed into infidelity!

Brethren, I believe in a living God, in a God who not only made the world, but who makes it; who is not only above and independent of his works, but who is ever present in them; who not only revealed himself to men in past ages, but who also reveals himself to men even now, and who is always seen by the pure in heart, and everywhere. I contend also for a living Saviour, not for a Saviour who lived and died in Judea, a temporary and local Saviour; but for one who fills all space, and is the same "yesterday, to-day and forever." I have no sympathy with the Arian heresy of ancient times, nor with the Socinian

heresy of modern times, which the church seems almost universally to embrace, save in name. The Christ in whom I believe is one with the Father, and he lives now, and is as much within the reach of the humble seeker after truth to-day as he was when Jesus walked about in Jerusalem and Galilee. Beware how you seek for your Saviour in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Seek not the living among the dead. Christ has risen, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. O, deny not the glorious doctrine of the resurrection. Deny that doctrine and you are without hope in the world, and there is left you no redemption from sin.

The Christ from whom we are to learn the Gospel is not an old Christ, a Jewish Christ, a dead Christ, but the RISEN Christ, who comes to us not as the Son of Mary, clothed in flesh and subject to its infirmities, but as the *Paraclete*, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, who was to lead us into all truth. The Holy Ghost, though distinguished in name, is one with the Son, the Christ, who is also one with the Father. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one God. What is predicated of the one, under the relation I am now considering the subject, may be predicated of the other. The teachings of the Holy Spirit, are the teachings of Christ. This Holy Spirit, the Comforter, was to be ever with us, and Jesus said, "He shall take of

mine, and show them unto you." The manifestations of this Spirit are given unto all men to profit withal. The teachings of the Spirit are the Gospel of Christ, and to learn the Gospel from the Spirit, is to learn it from the Master.

The teachings of the risen Christ, the ever-abiding Christ, the universal Christ, the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, I hold to be superior to all other teachings. They are more ultimate than the written Word, and to them we may appeal even from the Bible, if there be occasion. It is this, sometimes termed the inward Christ, because a spiritual Christ, and not a corporeal, that judges the Bible, interprets the Bible and vouches for its truth. This is the Master, the Bible is merely the Disciple. This Christ is near unto every one of us, knocking ever at the door of our hearts and praying for admission, and we may all let him in and receive his instructions. Whomsoever he instructs is the equal of the Bible, the peer of Peter, James or John; for Peter, James and John had no means of knowing divine truth, which you and I, my brethren, have not also within our reach.

I come now to the conclusion I have all along been aiming at; to wit, the entire independence of every individual mind, as it concerns every other individual mind, in the acquisition of truth and the formation of its creed. God is impar-

tial. He dispenses light alike to all men, of all ages and nations. All may know the truth, may know the Gospel, one as well as another. Every one has the Great Teacher within. No one therefore need go to another to be taught. The witness is within, and may bear witness that he is born of God.

Now in learning the Gospel you must do more than to go back and explore the archives of Judea, more than pore over the records of the past. The past is silent, and darkness broods over it. The light by which you shall behold it, the spirit by which you shall revivify it, and give it a voice and a meaning, must be borrowed from the Great Teacher within. You must seek the revelations of the Spirit, you must commune with the Divinity within you; and the word which you shall hear uttered within you, shall be superior to any written word whatever; it shall prove to be the living Word of God, which proceedeth forth from the Father, which was in the beginning with God, and which is God.

If every one have this Great Teacher, this Primal Source of truth in himself, there is no one dependent on another. No child of God is disinherited, and obliged to depend on an elder brother for support. No one then has the right to call another to an account for his belief. All are equals, and where all are equals no one has the supremacy.

If this be true, then whoso learns of Christ, of the inward Christ, has authority to teach. He may utter his words, whatever they may be, for they are not his words but the Spirit's. If the Spirit bid him bear his testimony against the traditions of the elders, the usages of the churches, the lessons of the doctors, so be it; let him do it and fear nothing. He must needs speak as the Spirit giveth him utterance. Let those whom he offends look to it, that it turn not out that they are offended, not at him, but at the Spirit of God. He may indeed mistake the teachings of the Spirit, he may misinterpret his instructions; let him therefore be modest, humble, prayerful, that he may not hear amiss. And let all who are wedded to old usages, who are ever pointing to our pious ancestors as if truth must needs have died with them, know of a surety, that truth is an Immortality, and over it time and change have no power. Its bloom is as fresh and fragrant to-day as it was on creation's morn. The grave hath no power over it. Though crucified, buried in a new tomb, hewn from the rock and guarded with armed soldiery, it rises and ascends to its Father, leading captivity itself captive. Forbear, then, to war against it. What you have that is true will survive; what you have that is false, must pass away, weep and howl as ye will.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOME PROGRESS.

Mr. Morton, after the meeting was out, at Mr. Howard's invitation, accompanied us home and spent the remainder of the day and evening with us. I found him, as his sermon had led me to expect, free from the usual cant of his profession, but serious and even enthusiastic. He appeared to be a man conscious that Heaven had raised him up for some important work, and he could not rest till he had accomplished it. He had himself been an unbeliever, but contrary to the usual practice of converted infidels, he was as liberal towards unbelievers, and as unrestrained in his intercourse with them, as though his own orthodoxy had never been questioned. I learned subsequently that his conduct in this respect, had induced some persons more remarkable for their zeal than their insight into the motives of human conduct, to suspect that he had never been really converted, but was at heart an unbeliever still; but he was not a man to be disturbed by such ungenerous suspicions, by whom-

soever they might be entertained. He kept on the even tenor of his way, acting always according to the promptings of his own heart, or his convictions of right, leaving the world to make its own comments.

We conversed for some time on the various efforts which had been made at different periods by professed Free Thinkers and Philosophers, to overthrow christianity, and their general ill success. This ill success I attempted to account for by the want of character in the Free Thinkers themselves, and by the general ignorance and stupidity of the multitude, who always had shown more alacrity in receiving the impositions of crafty priests and wily statesmen, than in listening to the instructions of philosophy and good sense. This I said somewhat against my conscience, chiefly for the purpose of drawing out Mr. Morton, and inducing him to give the opinions he himself might entertain. For, I had myself begun to suspect that religion had a deeper hold upon the human heart than unbelievers commonly imagine.

"I think," said Mr. Morton, "the real cause of failure on the part of unbelievers in uprooting religion, lies much deeper than your remarks would imply. Religion is a fact in the natural history of man, since we find it wherever we find man. It must then proceed from a law of his nature, or a fundamental want of his soul. If this be so, its destruction would imply not merely a

change of his views, but a radical change of his nature, his conversion into a different sort of being."

"Man, then, you hold to be naturally religious?"

"I hold that the ideas or conceptions, which he attempts to embody and realize, in his forms of religious faith and worship, are intuitions of reason; and without reason I suppose you would hardly contend man would be man."

"Surely not. But I am not certain that these conceptions are intuitions of reason. One of these conceptions is that of the existence of God. But I have no conception of such an existence; I cannot even conceive the possibility of such an existence."

"All in good time. We are concerning ourselves for the present with man, not with God. For the present at least, let us follow your favorite poet,

> 'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
> The proper study of mankind is man.'

Man, I take it, in his forms of religious faith and worship, seeks successfully or unsuccessfully, to realize his conceptions of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. These conceptions are the fundamental elements of religion; and they are also under one aspect the fundamental elements of reason, without which reason would not be reason."

"Develope your meaning, if you please, at greater length."

" Without confidence, trust, hope, we could not live a moment, for we could perform no duty tending to our own preservation or that of society. But at the bottom of all confidence, trust, hope, there is always a conception of the true, and even an assumption that it is true that matters will or will not turn out thus and so. It is an unquestionable fact that we are compelled by the very constitution of our intelligence to regard things, among other relations, always under the relation of true or false. All our reasonings imply it, and all our actions proceed on the assumption of it. Now we could not conceive of things as true or false, had we not a general conception of truth, of truth in itself. Why do I call this particular proposition true, and that one false? Because this answers to my conception of truth, and that one does not. Ask the same question in relation to any number of propositions you please, and the same answer must be returned. This proves that my conception is broader than any particular truth, nay, that it embraces universal truth. Without this conception I could not perceive any difference between truth and falsehood; I should have no standard,— true or false — by which to measure one or the other. This conception, conformity to which is to me the test of truth in all particular things, or propositions, is what I term the conception of the True in itself.

" But we not only regard things under the rela-

tion of true or false, but we also regard them under the relation of beauty or its opposite. There must then be in the intelligence the conception of the Beautiful. If we have not this conception, I cannot understand whence come our emotions on beholding distant mountains with harmonious outlines, the tranquil lake sleeping sweetly beneath the moonbeams, the masculine form of man, the graceful form and delicate features of woman, an act of heroism, or of disinterested affection; or those emotions we are conscious of when we ramble over the wild and sequestered scenes of nature; survey piles of moss-covered ruins; linger on spots where man has contended manfully for his rights; enter the solemn temple where generations of our forefathers have worshipped, or stand among the dead and think of the nations which were but are not. Strike out from the soul the conception of the beautiful, poetry, painting, sculpture, all the fine arts with the miracles of which man has doubled his existence and embellished nature, would fall; most of the generous and touching sentiments of our nature would languish, and the universe would wear to our eyes one uniform, silent, drab-colored hue.

"Suppose us deprived of the idea of the good, we could conceive no ground of preference. All events, all actions, all things, would be alike indifferent. We could never say This is better than That. Useful and injurious, just and unjust, right

and wrong, would be unmeaning terms. Life could have no purpose, exertion no aim. Existence would be to us as non-existence. But this is not the case. We unquestionably do regard persons, events, actions and things under the relation of good or evil. We are ever asking, 'Who will show us any good?' But in conceiving of things as good, we necessarily conceive of something by virtue of which they are good, and the absence of which would leave them evil. We consequently have the conception of the Good in itself.

"We have, then, these three ideas, the idea of the true, the idea of the beautiful, and that of the good. These ideas, since they have manifested themselves in the whole history of mankind, belong to the race; and as without them we could not be reasonable beings, we may term them constituent elements of the reason. But these ideas are not inactive. They are always struggling to realize themselves. We are ever asking ourselves, what is the true? What is the beautiful? What is the good? and exerting ourselves to possess them. We have a deep craving for them. And this craving, perhaps, in the last analysis, resolves itself into a craving for the infinite. We crave the infinite, and this craving of the infinite, is under one of its aspects, the religious sentiment."

"But do you think it true that all men have this craving for the infinite?"

"Are they ever satisfied with the finite? The

lamb crops its flowery food, lies down to rest, and ruminates in peace. Is it so with man? Gratify all his senses, lodge him in the marble palace, feast him on the rarest dainties of every clime, let music as voices from the invisible soothe him, flatter his ambition, let senates thrill with his eloquence, states and empires hang on his nod; — power, wealth, fame, pleasure, fail to fill up the measure of his wants, and they leave him poor and needy, ever seeking what he has not, sighing for what lies still beyond him. Man is never satisfied. The chant of the poet is but one long monotonous wail of the soul weary of what it has, and looking to what it has not, and cannot reach. The artist can never transfer to his marble or his canvass the visions of beauty which haunt his soul, and make him burn with fruitless passion. The philosopher, poring over the volume open round and about or within him, till reason approaches the verge of insanity, is ever finding new riddles to rede, new hieroglyphics to decipher; ever rages within him the 'eternal thirst to know,' to pierce the darkness, leap through the unknown, and grasp the infinite. This universal dissatisfaction of the soul with what it has, this perpetual craving for what lies beyond and above it, this eternal upshooting towards the boundless and the perfect, is what I call, under one of its aspects, the religious sentiment, and this sentiment is universal, eternal and indestructible."

"But admitting the existence of this sentiment,

may we not regard it as the result of education? May we not ascribe its origin to the fact, that in childhood and youth our heads are filled with words about the infinite, so that in all after life we are unable to satisfy ourselves with what is finite and earthly?"

"I should think not. Education has no creative power; it can merely unfold and direct the powers which nature confers. It cannot make a poet of a horse, nor a mathematician of an ape. Education may undoubtedly do much towards determining the forms this sentiment shall wear, the positive institutions in which it may be embodied; but it cannot originate the tendency itself, unless we ascribe to it a power of completely altering, not merely the manifestations of a being, but also its permanent and indestructible nature. But even if education could produce the result in question, how comes it that man is the only race of beings known that so educates itself? Must it not result from something peculiar in the human race? If so, it virtually amounts to the same thing.

"Besides, if you form a conception of the finite, you must also of the infinite, for the two are correlative, and contemporary in the reason. Educated or uneducated, we all have the idea of the infinite, and, what is more, we cannot get rid of it even if we would."

"Why not?"

"Do you not conceive of yourself as finite?"

"Certainly."

"And what is it that you say, when you say you are finite?"

"That I am limited, bounded."

"Not infinite. You see, sir, that you presuppose the idea of the infinite, the moment you undertake to describe yourself as finite."

"But if all men have the conception of the infinite, and a craving for it, if all men have the conceptions of the true, the beautiful, and the good, which you say are the fundamental elements of religion, how happens it, that all men have not a religion, and in fact one and the same religion?"

"Your question will be answered if you distinguish between the religious sentiment and the forms of faith and worship by which men seek to realize it. The sentiment is natural, invariable and indestructible; but the form is artificial, variable and transitory. We are religious beings by virtue of the fact that we have the conceptions of the true, the beautiful and the good; we have a religion only when we have embodied these conceptions in an institution, such as was judaism, Greek and Roman polytheism, or, during the middle ages, catholicism. When the prevailing religion, that is, the dominant religious institution of the epoch, fails to represent all that we can conceive of the true, the beautiful and the good, we break away from it, and are for the time being without religion.

"Take your own case. You had all the con-

ceptions which are the elements of religion, but as you did not find at the moment you began your inquiries, a religious institution which embodied them all to the satisfaction of your understanding, you doubted of all religion, and became an unbeliever. You are not yet able to combine these elements in a manner to satisfy yourself, and therefore, though I hold you to be religious, you have as yet no religion.

"The reason why the prevailing institution does not satisfy you, is either in the fact that you do not fully comprehend it, or that your ideal is above it. You may have seen the religion of your country from a low and unfavorable point of sight, and may have therefore inferred that it embodies less of truth, beauty and goodness than it actually does. In this case it is not that religion you have rejected, but something else to which you have given its name.

"Admit, however, that you fully comprehend it, perceive it precisely as it is, and are really able to take in more of truth, beauty and goodness than it represents, still you have one or two inquiries to make before you can be justified in rejecting christianity. Does what passes for christianity fully represent the ideal of Jesus? Is it equal to what Jesus designed to institute? Is it a perfect realization of the conception of Jesus? If not,— and I am sure that it is not,— then you should seek to ascertain the conception of Jesus, the amount of truth, beauty and goodness he contemplated."

"And if that be below my ideal?"

"Then you must turn prophet, and preach a new religion. You have no other alternative. If you will do this, and show me that you really comprehend more of truth, beauty and goodness, than Jesus did, I will become one of your disciples, and, if need be, follow you to the cross."

CHAPTER XX.

GOD.

"But all this, though very well, fails to reach my case. Grant I have the conceptions of which you speak, still I have no conception of God, and without God, I can hardly be religious. I not only have no conception of God, but I cannot even form one."

"If you mean to say that you have no *definite* conception of God, that you cannot define the idea of God, you doubtless are correct. But if you mean that you can have *no* conception of God, I must beg leave to differ from you."

"But what conception can I form of God? What is God?"

"He is spirit."

"But what is spirit?"

"Spirit is something to be described chiefly by negatives; we can easily tell what it is not, but not so easily what it is. Nevertheless, I apprehend that you may attain to a proximate idea of what it is, if you attend to the manner in which we commonly use the word spirit.

"The use of this word spirit, is various. We

say the spirit of the remark, and a spirited remark, spirit of nature, spirit of the universe, spirit of truth, spirit of man, a man of spirit, spirit of the affair, spirit of wine, &c. Now in all these and the like cases, I apprehend that we use the word to designate the *reality* and *force* of the thing or subject of which we speak. 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' The mere form or verbal enactment of the legislative authority, is not the law; the intent, the reality, the *spirit* of the enactment, that which is actually intended by the legislative authority, is the law, obedience to which gives life.

"We say 'the spirit of his assertion.' In this case we make more or less clearly in our minds, a distinction between the form of the assertion, the literal words used, technically interpreted, and the general scope and meaning, the real intention. Here the force and reality of the assertion, the real thing asserted, is what we would designate by the phrase, 'spirit of his assertion.'

"By a chemical process we extract a substance from corn, which, when diluted with water, we call *ardent spirits*. Here again is the same radical meaning of the word. We have extracted the force, the strength, the essence of the corn, and we term it spirit. Etymological research into the word, would confirm this result, but I waive it as unnecessary.

"Now the human mind is, to say the least, so

constituted, that it must believe that what is, is; that a thing cannot both exist and not exist at the same time. That which exists it must believe is something. In all objects which we see we recognise an existence. We do not believe that the universe is a mere apparition, a mere sense-shadow. Something is at the bottom of it. Something lies back of all appearances and shines out in all appearances. The phenomena around us may change their colors or their forms, they may now be putting forth the buds and blossoms of spring, or wearing the thick foliage of summer, or the rich and varied and golden hues of autumn, or stand in the chilling nakedness of winter; yet amid all these changes, we seem to ourselves to recognise something which changes not, — a permanent, indestructible Essence, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. This something is what we mean by Reality. Amid all these appearances, these sense-shadows, these flitting apparitions, these perpetual changes, we believe there is something Real, Permanent, Unchangeable.

"Now this real, permanent, unchangeable Something, we believe to be in everything which exists, and to be that which exists, and only that. It is always *the* thing. That which is not real, permanent, unchangeable, is to us no existence, no being, but a mere shadow, an unsubstantial form, a nothing. The reality, the permanent substance, the living force of that of which we speak, that

which constitutes its essence, and makes it what it is, is then, if I mistake not, what we mean by its *spirit*. The spirit of a man, is the real, the permanent, the substantial man, contradistinguished from the form, the shadow, or changing apparition which environs him. Take what is real, substantial, unchangeable in man, that which constitutes him man wherever he is, and keeps him man in spite of all the modifications of disposition or character to which he may be subjected, in time or space, and you have the spirit of man; that is, you have the reality, the ground, the substance of the being called man, so far forth as he contains them in himself.

"Extend your thoughts now from man to the universe. Penetrate beyond and beneath all forms and shadows, all that is changeable and transitory, that is not, but appears; seize what is real, substantial, what constitutes the Ground and Reality of all existences, that which remains unchanged amidst all changes, which

> 'Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
> Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent;'

and you have what may be termed the Spirit of the Universe, the Life, the Essence, the Ground, the Living Force of all that is.

"It follows from this that the Spiritual is always

the Real, the Substantial, in opposition to those who regard it as chimerical, as merely imaginary. Hence also that which we regard as the real, the substantial, is always the Invisible. That which is seen, which we examine with our senses, is never to us, did we but know it, the Thing itself. It is mere appearance, shadow, pointing to a reality back of it, a substance which sends it forth, but which it is not. We always call that which is permanent, immutable, in the thing, — not its apparition, — the Thing itself, and this always transcends the senses, — is transcendental. Spirit, is in fact, the only reality of which we ever do or ever can form any conception. Men are materialists only because they misinterpret or misname their own beliefs.

"Now, God is Spirit. He is then the Life, the Being, the Force, the Substance of whatever is. In light he is the light, in life he is the life; in soul he is the soul, in reason he is the reason, in truth he is the truth, in cause he is causality, in beauty he is the beautiful; in goodness he is the good — God.* Wherever we attain to that which is real, which absolutely exists, which possesses a real, living force, we attain to God. In

* I am not sure but I am indebted to an extract which I have somewhere met with from a Hindoo writing for the thought here expressed, as well as in part for the language, but I have no leisure at present to make the necessary reference.

all these forms, in all these changing objects, whether in the natural world or the moral, which are forever passing and repassing before our eyes, is there not always one thing which we seek? Amidst all these mutations which oppress and sadden our hearts, and make us at times exclaim,

'This world is all a fleeting show,'

do we not seek the Permanent, and that which changes not? In these forms of faith which distract us, these creeds, dogmas, theories of the moral and intellectual world, so full of vanity, ever varying and imparting life never, seek we not something which is not vain, varying, distracting, which is not dead, nor subject to death, but living and life-giving? Wearied and worn with the endless windings of our pilgrimage, finding our journey ever beginning and never ending, that toil, toil, eternal task-work is our lot, sigh we not for deliverance, to be freed from our labors, and to find repose? Weary and heavy laden we would throw off our burdens and be at rest. The soul cries out for an Ineffable Repose. Now, what we seek in all this, is God. He is always the one thing we are seeking after. Amidst the variable and the transitory he is the Immutable and the Permanent. Amidst clashing and distracting forms of faith, he is the Truth; to the soul aspiring to be wise and good, he is Wisdom and Goodness; to the weary and heavy laden he is

Rest, Repose. In all things we seek a Reality, and all Reality in the last analysis is God.

"God is to us the invisible Substance, the invisible Reality of all that arrests our senses, excites our minds or touches our hearts; the Invisible Universe of which this outward, visible universe is the shadow, the apparition, or manifestation. Its life, being, cause, substance, reality are in Him, in whom we, as a part of it, 'live and move and have our being.'

"To the question, then, what is God? the best answer I can give, is, that he is the Unseen, Unchangeable, and Permanent Reality of this mighty apparition which men call nature, or the universe. You may say that this answer is vague and unsatisfactory, that it defines nothing. Be it so. I began by saying God cannot be defined. He is indefinable, because he is infinite, and infinite is that which cannot be defined. Nevertheless this answer I think, with the remarks I have made, will help you, not to comprehend the Incomprehensible, but to apprehend it."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEMONSTRATION.

"I THINK I catch some glimmering of what you mean; but allowing that your answer to the question, what is God, is satisfactory, still I wish it demonstrated that there is a God."

"I can hardly be expected to give you a complete demonstration in the course of a single conversation. What I have already said, would be satisfactory to my own mind; but if it is not to yours, we will look at the problem a little closer. I suppose, if I make it as certain that there is a God, as you are that you exist, it will answer your purpose?"

"Yes. I shall be satisfied with that degree of certainty."

"I have already, I believe, established the fact that we have the conceptions of the true, the beautiful, and the good, and that we should cease to be men if we had them not; or in other words, that divested of these conceptions, reason would not be reason."

"That point I consider settled."

"If we are compelled by the very constitution of our being to entertain the idea of the true, for instance, we must believe that something is true. If I believe something is true, I must believe in the true in itself, for it is only by means of the conception of the true in itself, that I am able to conceive of any particular truth. Besides, I have shown that the conception of the true, as a conception of the reason, is a conception of the true in itself. Now the true in itself, is necessarily, universally and eternally true. For, if we could conceive any condition under which it would not be true, then its truth would depend on conditions, and the true in itself, would be proved to be not the true in itself.

"Now, when we say a thing is true, we say that it is, and is just what it purports to be. That which has no existence, can have no truth. The truth of a matter cannot exceed its existence. To say a thing exists is to say that it is something, a reality, a substance. When therefore we say something is true, we say something exists, that there is a substance."

"But I do not see that you are making much progress."

"Be patient. We have now found that inasmuch as we have the conception of the true, we have also the conception of substance. But we have the conception of the true in itself, that is, of the universally and eternally and unconditionally

true. Then, if I am right in identifying the true with substance, in saying that the true must, so far forth as it is true, exist, be a reality, then we must admit the existence of substance in itself; that is, a substance which requires no conditions out of itself in order to be a substance, and which therefore is always and everywhere a substance, that is, absolute substance."

"Do you mean by substance matter?"

"I might ask you what you mean by matter, but let that pass. I mean by substance that which really exists, which is a reality. Whether it be matter or spirit, is not now the point of inquiry. Some have supposed that what we term matter and spirit, are neither of them substances, but two modes by which absolute substance manifests itself. But this by the way. We have now found by analyzing the conception of the reason, the conception of absolute substance. That is, a substance which is substance in itself, containing in itself the grounds of its own existence. It is therefore uncreated and independent. If it were created it would be a substance only under certain relations, and the idea of absolute substance would have to be carried further back and predicated of the creator. The very conception of absolute substance precludes all necessity of any conditions of its existence, — all idea of its depending on aught beside itself to be, or to be what it is.

"This absolute substance must also be one, and

can be but one. Two absolutes were as much an absurdity, as two infinities, or two almighties. It is not a mere aggregate or totality, made up of parts. If we suppose it made up of parts, we must suppose each of the parts an absolute substance, and then a part would be equal to the whole; or we must suppose none of the parts are absolute, and then it would be as impossible to obtain the absolute from their union, or aggregation, as it would be the infinite from the union of an indefinite number of units. The absolute then can exist only in unity, and as the substance is absolute substance, it of course must be one and one only.

"This substance is also a cause. There can be no cause without a substance, unless nothing be capable of producing something. That every cause is a substance, that is to say, a real existence, nobody denies; that every substance, or real existence, of which we conceive, is also a cause, may not perhaps at first sight be quite so evident; but I think I can make it out.

"We have in our minds unquestionably the idea of cause. By cause we do not understand merely invariable antecedence, as a certain philosopher pretends, but an active, productive force. We conceive of various causes, but of all causes as either relative or absolute, that is, as causes within certain limits and under certain conditions, or as a cause without limits, without conditions, always and everywhere a cause. The relative

implies the absolute. The absolute can be found only in the absolute. The absolute cause then must be identified with absolute substance. The absolute substance, is then absolute cause.

"Moreover, I know substance only under the relation of cause. My real conception of all existences, is of them as so many causes. I know myself only as a cause. I become acquainted with myself, I may say attain to the conception of my personal existence, only by surprizing myself in the act of doing or causing something. I will to raise my arm; I attend to what is said to me, to the impressions made on my organs of sense. Now in every act of volition, of willing, of attention, there is an actor, a cause, and this cause is precisely what I mean when I say I, myself. *I* will, *I* attend. I know myself then as a power capable of producing effects, that is, as a cause.

"I know the external world only as something which produces effects on me, or on itself. Its various objects produce impressions on my organs of sense, and I see them producing certain effects on one another, and I can ascertain their existence no further than I can find them producing effects; consequently I know them only as causes. But they are not absolute causes. I see them limit one another, and they are also limited, up to a certain extent, by my causality. Nor am I an absolute cause. I cannot do whatever I will. My power is bounded on every side, and I am not more cer-

tain of my causality itself, than I am of my weakness.

"But if both nature and myself are mere limited causes, causes only within certain limits, and under certain conditions, the absolute cause, which our reason demands, must be back of both nature and us, a substance more ultimate than either. It can be found only in the absolute substance, which is not only absolute substance, but absolute cause. I thus obtain the conclusion, not only that absolute substance is absolute cause, but that it is something above and independent of nature and of myself; therefore that neither nature nor myself is the absolute cause.

"I have now established the existence of one, absolute, original, independent substance, and which is also absolute cause. Now our radical idea of God, is that of a cause, creator. Take away from God the idea of cause, and he would not be God. In establishing then the existence of a universal and absolute cause, one, and independent, have I not established the existence of God?"

"Not to my satisfaction. Before you have finished your work, you must establish the fact that this absolute cause, is not only a cause, but also intelligent, and personal. For as yet I do not see that you have advanced beyond pantheism."

"There is nothing pantheistic in the views I have thus far advanced. Pantheism is of two

sorts: one, a low sort of pantheism, identifies God with nature; this is properly atheism: the other sinks nature in God, and recognises no existence but that of God; this was the pantheism of the famous Spinoza, which some people have been foolish enough to call atheism. Spinoza was so absorbed in the idea of God, that he could see nothing else. But let this pass. The personality of this absolute cause, by which I suppose is meant the fact that it is not a mere fatal cause, but a free intentional cause, I think, follows as a necessary induction from its independence. It is an absolute cause; nothing lies back of it compelling it to act. Its motive to activity must be drawn from itself, and I cannot conceive a cause acting freely, from its own suggestions, unless it wills to act. Its independence and unity, would therefore to my mind imply its personality in the only sense in which personality can be predicated of God. But I do not insist on this.

"The intelligence of God, for I shall henceforth speak of the absolute cause, under this title, is sometimes deduced from the fact that intelligence appears in the effect; but on this argument I do not rely. I get at his intelligence by another process.

"The nature, the characteristic of reason is intelligence. The reason not only has the power to know, but actually knows. It is for us the principle of intelligence. All that we know at all we know by virtue of the reason. It is by its light,

that I perceive my own existence, that I am conscious of what passes within me, that I take cognizance of my thoughts, my sensations, passions, emotions, affections. On its authority I affirm that I exist, that you exist, that the external world exists. All the light I have comes from it; and its authority always suffices me.

"This is not all. You and I both believe the reason to be authoritative. You try to make me believe that reason determines so and so, and you feel that if you succeed in making me see the point as you do I must admit it. You would think me a madman if I denied the relations of numbers, or refused to admit plain, legitimate, logical deductions from acknowledged premises. All mankind do the same. What each believes to be reasonable, he believes all ought to accept.

"Nobody ever asks for any higher authority than the reason. What we call demonstration is only stripping a subject of its envelopes, and showing it to the reason as it is. If when seen in its nakedness the reason approves it, we say it is demonstrated to be true; if the reason disapproves it, we say it is demonstrated to be false."

"It is hardly necessary to be thus particular in establishing the authority of reason with me, for I have never questioned it. Religious people are those who deny the authority of reason."

"Nevertheless, sir, I am about to make an application of the reason from which, if you are not

previously prepared, you will recoil. But assuming, for the present, the authority of the reason, I shall insist on your yielding to every legitimate application of it. Now, we speak of reason as individual, as though it were yours or mine; but nevertheless, I believe it declares that it is not individual. Were it individual it were personal, and we could control its conceptions. But all its conceptions have in fact a character of necessity. We cannot control them. We cannot make it affirm what we will. It declares two and two are four, and we have no power of will to make it declare otherwise.

"Nay, more, we always look upon the conceptions of the reason as possessing authority beyond the sphere of individual consciousness. They all bear the character of universality and absoluteness. They transcend time and space. We regard justice, for instance, as something eternal and immutable. What is just now we believe was always just and always will be just. Its character of justice is independent of time and place, and of the individuals who entertain the idea of justice. So of truth, as I have already shown. The conceptions of the reason therefore are not relative, dependent and temporary, but independent, eternal, and absolute. If the reason reveals its conceptions as absolute, it then reveals itself as absolute. On the same authority then that I affirm my existence, I affirm the absoluteness of the reason.

"Now, the reason is something or it is nothing. If it were nothing, a non-entity, could it reveal itself, impose its laws upon my understanding, and speak to me a clear and independent voice in spite of my will? I have only the reason by which to determine the fact that I entertain the ideas of the true, the beautiful, and the good, and I have its authority equally express, that it is a reality, and the highest reality I am acquainted with. If then it be an absolute reality, as it declares itself to be, then, it must be identical with the absolute substance, for I have shown that there cannot be two absolutes. Then the absolute substance, is not only absolute cause, but absolute reason. The essence of reason is intelligence; absolute reason must be absolute intelligence, intelligence in itself. God then is not a mere blind cause, but an intelligent cause, intelligence in itself."

"But do you mean to assert that my intelligence is absolute, that my reason is God?"

"No, sir. I mean to assert no such thing. I mean merely to assert that the reason which makes its appearance in us, and whose scattered rays constitute our intelligence, is itself above us, and independent of us. When it appears in us it is of course subjected to human conditions, which are frailty and error. But at the same time, it reveals itself as stretching beyond us, and assures us that in that world into which it permits us to look as through a glass darkly, it possesses a character of absolute

intelligence. Who is there to whom reason does not reveal itself as containing more light than he has beheld, more truth than he has comprehended? It is not reason subjected to the infirmities of the flesh, but reason taken absolutely, reason in its fulness, in its Godhead, of which I speak. I speak of it in its absoluteness, because it assures me that it is absolute, and if I may not trust it when it gives me this assurance, I know not what right I have to rely on it when it assures me of my own existence.

"Reason once established in its absoluteness, the intelligence of God is demonstrated. From his intelligence and independence, I think the induction of his personality follows as a matter of course. His freedom is asserted in his independence. He is independent and absolute. No power out of himself then can force him to act. He cannot be subjected to any external necessity. All the necessity he can be under of acting must be in himself. He is then perfectly free. He need not act unless he please; and he may act as he pleases. Conceive a being thus free, and at the same time absolute intelligence, and tell me if it be possible for him to act without self-consciousness, without knowing that he acts and wherefore he acts? Must he not from the very nature of the case act from volition, because he wills to act? Now, a being that is self-conscious, who knows what he does, and acts from volition, it

strikes me, must possess personality in the highest degree. I am a person no further than I am a free intentional causality. But God is an infinitely free intentional causality. Therefore he must be infinitely more of a person than I am."

"But you have as yet clothed your God with no moral attributes."

"All in good time. But beware how you undertake to cut the Divinity up into attributes. He is ONE. He is, as we have thus found him, absolute substance, an infinite, free, intelligent, intentional causality. Would you determine whether he is just or not, you must descend into the reason, and inquire whether you have the absolute idea of justice. You will find this idea, as we have already found the absolute idea of goodness. The absolute can reside only in the absolute. God then is not only absolute substance, an independent, free, intelligent causality, but he is also just and good. You must go through with all the absolute ideas of the reason, and when you have exhausted these you have determined the number and character of the attributes of the Deity."

"I am not certain that I have followed you through all the steps of your analysis and induction, but if I have, and rightly comprehended you, you have indicated a process by which the existence of God may be as satisfactorily demonstrated as any article of human belief. But you must not expect me to acquiesce at once. I must have

time to reflect, and to go over the subject in my own mind. I can hardly persuade myself as yet, that you have not committed some mistake, for your conclusion seems too evident not to be doubtful."

"Take all the time you please. You say rightly I have *indicated* a process. I have only indicated it. To give a complete demonstration would require more time than I have at my command, and more patience than I fear you have to bestow upon so dry, though so important a subject."

"But, Mr. Morton, though you have obtained a God, I do not see that he has done anything. How do you demonstrate the fact that he creates?"

CHAPTER XXII.

CREATION.

"You will bear in mind, that we have found God as a cause, not a potential cause, occasionally a cause, accidentally a cause, but absolute cause, cause in itself, always a cause, and everywhere a cause. Now a cause that causes nothing is no cause at all. If then God be a cause, he must cause something, that is, create. Creation then is necessary."

"Do you mean to say that God lies under a necessity of creating?"

"God lies under nothing, for he is over all, and independent of all. The necessity of which I speak is not a foreign necessity, but a necessity of his own nature. What I mean is, he cannot be what he is without creating. It would be a contradiction in terms to call him a cause, and to say that he causes nothing."

"But out of what does God create the world? Out of nothing, as our old catechisms have it?"

"Not out of nothing certainly, but out of himself, out of his own fulness. You may form an idea of

creation by noting what passes in the bosom of your own consciousness. I will to raise my arm. My arm may be palsied, or a stronger than mine may hold it down, so that I cannot raise it. Nevertheless I have created something; to wit, the will or intention to raise it. In like manner as I by an effort of my will or an act of my causality, create a will or intention, does God create the world. The world is God's will or intention, existing in the bosom of his consciousness, as my will or intention exists in the bosom of mine.

"Now, independent of me, my will or intention has no existence. It exists, is a reality no further than I enter into it; and it ceases to exist, vanishes into nothing the moment I relax the causative effort which gave it birth. So of the world. Independent of God it has no existence. All the life and reality it has are of God. It exists no further than he enters into it, and it ceases to exist, becomes a nonentity the moment he withdraws or relaxes the creative effort which calls it into being.

"This, if I mistake not, strikingly illustrates the dependence of the universe, of all worlds and beings on God. They exist but by his will. He willed, and they were; commanded, and they stood fast. He has but to will and they are not; to command, and the heavens roll together as a scroll, or disappear as the morning mist before the rising sun. This is easily seen to be

true because he is their life, their being; — in him, says an apostle, 'we live and move and have our being.'

"The question is sometimes asked, where is the universe? Where is your resolution, intention? In the bosom of your consciousness. So the universe, being God's will or intention, exists in the consciousness of the Deity. The bosom of the infinite Consciousness is its place, its residence, its home. God then is all round and within it, as you are all round, and within your intention. Here is the omnipresence of the Deity. You cannot go where God is not, unless you cease to exist. Not because God fills all space, as we sometimes say, thus giving him as it were extension, but because he embosoms all space, as we embosom our thoughts in our own consciousness.

"This view of creation, also, shows us the value of the universe, and teaches us to respect it. It is God's will, God's intention, and is divine, so far forth as it really exists, and therefore is holy, and should be reverenced. Get at a man's intentions, and you get at his real character. A man's intentions are the revelations of himself; they show you what the man is. The universe is the revelation of the Deity. So far as we read and understand it, do we read and understand God. When I am penetrating into the heavens and tracing the revolutions of the stars, I am learning the will of God; when I penetrate the earth and

explore its strata, study the minuter particles of matter and their various combinations, I am mastering the science of theology; when I listen to the music of the morning songsters, I am listening to the voice of God; and it is his beauty I see when my eye runs over the varied landscape or 'the flower enameled mead.'

"You see here the sacred character which attaches to all science, shadowed forth through all antiquity, by the right to cultivate it being claimed for the priests alone. But every man should be a priest; and the man of science, who does not perceive that he is also a priest, but half understands his calling. In ascertaining these laws of nature, as you call them, you are learning the ways of God. Put off your shoes then when you enter the temple of science, for you enter the sanctuary of the Most High.

"But man is a still fuller manifestation of the Deity. He is superior to all outward nature. Sun and stars pale before a human soul. The powers of nature, whirlwinds, tornados, cataracts, lightnings, earthquakes, are weak before the power of thought, and lose all their terrific grandeur in presence of the struggles of passion. Man with a silken thread turns aside the lightning and chains up the harmless bolt. Into man enters more of the fulness of the Divinity, for in his own likeness God made man. The study of man then is still more the study of the Divinity, and the science of man

becomes a still nearer approach to the science of God.

"This is not all. Viewed in this light what new worth and sacredness attaches to this creature man, on whom kings, priests and nobles have for so many ages trampled with sacrilegious feet. Whoso wrongs a man defaces the image of God, desecrates a temple of the living God, and is guilty not merely of a crime but of a sin. Indeed, all crimes become sins, all offences against man, offences against God. Hear this, ye wrong-doers, and know that it is not from your feeble brother only, that ye have to look for vengeance. Hear this, ye wronged and down-trodden; and know that God is wronged in that ye are wronged, and his omnipotent arm shall redress you, and punish your oppressors. Man is precious in the sight of God, and God will vindicate him."

"All this is very fine, but it strikes me that you identify the Deity with his works. You indeed call him a cause, but he causes or creates, if I understand you, only by putting himself forth. Independent of him, his works have no reality. He is their life, being, substance. Is not this Pantheism?"

"Not at all. God is indeed the life, being, substance of all his works, yet is he independent of his works. I am in my intention, and my intention is nothing any further than I enter into it; but nevertheless my intention is not *me*; I have the

complete control over it. It does not exhaust me. It leaves me with all my creative energy, free to create anew as I please. So of God. Creation does not exhaust him. His works are not necessary to his being, they make up no part of his life. He retains all his creative energy, and may put it forth anew as seems to him good. Grant he stands in the closest relation to his works; he stands to them in the relation of a cause to an effect, not in the relation of identity, as pantheism supposes."

"But waiving the charge of pantheism, it would seem from what you have said that creation must be as old as the Creator. What then will you do with the Mosaic cosmogony, which supposes creation took place about six thousand years ago?"

"I leave the Mosaic cosmogony where I find it. As to the inference that creation must be as old as the Creator, I would remark, that a being cannot be a creator till he creates, and as God was always a creator, always then must there have been a creation; but it does not follow from this that creation must have always assumed its present form, much less that this globe in its present state must have existed from all eternity. It may have been, for aught we know, subjected to a thousand revolutions and transformations, and the date of its habitation by man, may indeed have been no longer ago than Hebrew chronology asserts.

"But much of this difficulty about the date of

creation arises from supposing that creation must have taken place in time. But the creations of God are not in time but in eternity. Time begins with creation, and belongs to created nature. With God there is no time, as there is no space. He transcends time and space. He inhabiteth eternity, and is both time and space. When we speak of beginning in relation to the origin of the universe, we should refer to the source whence it comes, not to the time when it came. Its beginning is not in time but in God, and is now as much as it ever was.

"You should think of the universe as something which is, not as something which was. God did not, strictly speaking, make the world, finish it, and then leave it. He makes it, he constitutes it now. Regard him therefore not, if I may borrow the language of Spinoza, as its 'temporary and transient cause, but as its permanent and indwelling cause;' that is, not as a cause which effects, and then passes off from his works, to remain henceforth in idleness, or to create new worlds; but as a cause which remains in his works, ever producing them, and constituting them by being present in them, their life, being and substance. Take this view, and you will never trouble yourself with the question whether the world was created, six thousand, or six million of years ago."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RESULTS.

This conversation with Mr. Morton threw some light on the great problems with which I had labored, and convinced me that the philosophy I had hitherto cherished was superficial and far from giving a complete and satisfactory account of the actual facts of human nature. I had done great injustice to man in reducing him to five senses and the operations of the understanding. There was more in him than I had seen. There were facts of his nature which could be traced to no empirical origin, transcendental facts, inherent in the reason itself, and which it would by no means answer to leave out of the account.

Mr. Morton had assumed man to be naturally religious. Was he not right in this? How else could I account for the existence of religion as a fact of human history? Religion I find everywhere in history. No nation, tribe or horde, however enlightened, ignorant or savage, has as yet been discovered without some form of religious worship. Go where you will, you find the priest

and the altar, man seeking to keep open some kind of communication with superior powers.

Nor is this all. Religion is not a mere unproductive fact in our history. Of all sentiments, the religious sentiment appears to be the strongest, and to exert the widest and most absolute dominion over the human race. At its bidding hostile armies lay down their arms, and meet and embrace as brothers; at its voice kings and tyrants tremble on their thrones; the mother offers up her son in sacrifice, and the virgin her chastity. Singular that a mere accidental fact, having no root in human nature, should be thus powerful, and so sway the passions, interests and affections of mankind!

No man is entirely free from the workings of this sentiment. Even I myself, in my doubts and unbelief, felt the need of holding intercourse with powers above me; and there were times when I could almost kneel down and pray. A poor mother saw her child fall into the river: she rushed in after it, and did all she could to rescue it, but in vain. She saw she could do no more, and that the child must drown. In an agony of despair, she stretched out her hands and exclaimed, "O thou great Unknown, save my child!" Did she not utter the voice of nature? In fact does there not always go with us a sense of the presence of an invisible being to whom we stand in certain undefined relations? When we fancy that we are alone, when solemn silence reigns around us, and

all is still, do we not fear and tremble, and start we know not at what? Does it not seem to us that we are not alone, but standing as it were before a dread Presence?

Then also there is the sense of insufficiency. I am oppressed with a sense of my insufficiency for myself. I start in life with high hopes and generous aims. I resolve to lead a life of strict virtue; but some how or other I am perpetually failing. I have yielded to temptation, and am expelled from the garden of innocence. For a time I weep, but soon I recover myself, resolve to try again; and again I fail. I see an excellence I cannot reach, approve a good, from which, though I struggle to gain it, I am ever departing. What shall I do? I feel the need of some succoring being to extend me an arm, that though I stumble I may not fall utterly. All of our race, who have attained to any experience, I apprehend, have felt this painful sense of insufficiency, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Hence the universal demand for spiritual aid, for a communication with the Powers above, that we may obtain assistance to wash out our sins, and to enable us to maintain our integrity for the future.

This feeling, I apprehend, lies at the bottom of all worship, and has given rise to all the rites and ceremonies of religion. From the consciousness of sin, the need of atoning for it, and the need of divine aid in maintaining a holy life, have arisen

the various sacrifices of man, animals, fruits and flowers, which make up so great a part of all the religions of antiquity. Men did not submit to them because priests enjoined them; but because there was a deep want of the soul which demanded them. The form which they assumed, was, perhaps, not always the best, but all defects of this kind belonged to the general defective culture of the epoch in question.

Have not unbelievers ascribed too much to the craft of priests and statesmen? Priests have no doubt made of religion a trade, but they have been able to do this only because religion has had a strong hold on the consciences, or the affections of the people. Nor could they have originated religion. A priest is an officer of religion, and therefore must have been posterior to religion. Religion must have existed before it could have had ministers. Statesmen have no doubt found at times in religion a support for despotism, but only by availing themselves of its power over the people. Had not religion already swayed the people, it could have furnished no aid to the despot.

We consider art as natural to man, or springing from a natural want, because we find that man is everywhere an artist. The rude Indian polishes his bow, and paints the prow of his birchen canoe; the Indian maiden decorates her hair with feathers and shells, and the Indian mother binds the wampum around the neck of her child, bearing witness

to the same indestructible instinct which shall immortalize a Phidias or a Praxiteles, a Michael Angelo or a Raphael. From the fact that man wars with man, constructs weapons and delights in battle, we infer that the fighting propensity is natural to him. Why not, then, from the fact that he everywhere venerates and adores, erects the altar and inducts the priest, infer that the religious sentiment is natural to him, that he is naturally religious?

But if religion be natural to man, it is useless to war against it. He is religious because he is man. So long then as he remains man he will have some kind of religious worship. Can the infidel change his nature? Can man be converted into a different order of being? If not, then let the infidel cease his warfare. He professes to respect nature, let him then respect it in man, and not less when it prompts him to adore, than when it prompts him to build himself a cabin, clothe his body, or seek truth and goodness. Religion must be as indestructible as man's nature, and let us therefore cease to waste our time in trying to get rid of it.

But man not only seeks to adore; he also seeks to ascertain the true object of adoration. He inquires if there be really any object worthy of adoration, and if so, what and where? This question, Mr. Morton seemed to me to have answered. The reason demands an absolute cause,

and this cause we are not, and the external world is not. Then it must be above both us and nature, the cause of their causality and ours. I look into the reason I find that it contains the ideas of the finite and the infinite. This idea of the infinite is not a secondary idea. I cannot derive it from any other idea. My ordinary experience makes me acquainted only with finite things. But from no imaginable number of finites can I deduce the infinite. I can draw from a thing only what is in it; and as the idea of the finite does not contain the infinite, I cannot deduce the infinite from it. Logically also the idea of the infinite must precede that of the finite. I cannot perceive a thing, as finite, unless I have at the same time the conception of the infinite from which to distinguish it. As my first experience is of finite things, the conception of the infinite must precede experience, and must therefore be a transcendental idea. That is, a conception of the pure reason, of the reason prior to all experience. If then I may trust the reason, there must be somewhere the infinite. But I can predicate infinity neither of myself nor of nature. Then back of and above both nature and myself, there must be an infinite reality, — God. The conception of unity, of perfection, would lead me to the same result.

But may I trust the reason? If not, I am in a sad condition. I have nothing but the reason with which to show even that reason ought not to be

trusted. Why shall I trust it when it declares it is not worthy of trust, rather than when it reveals to me my own existence, nature, and God? If it be not worthy of trust, then I have no ground for believing it when it declares it to be untrustworthy; but if it be worthy of trust at all, as it is one in all its degrees, why may I not trust it in its highest revelations, as well as in its lowest? But all this is unnecessary. I am not free in this matter. Reason addresses me always in an imperative voice, and its conceptions command my assent. I cannot discredit them if I would. Moreover, what have I always contended for? I have always extolled reason and condemned religious people for depressing it. I have condemned them because I have supposed reason to be against them. I have then always admitted the authority of reason. I will do it now. If I do I see not how I can escape from Mr. Morton's conclusions. But do I wish to escape from these conclusions? Not at all.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUPERNATURALISM.

"I HAVE been thinking over," said I to Mr. Morton, on meeting him a few days after the conversation I have recorded, "your reasoning in proof of the existence of a God; I have weighed it as carefully as I could, and I confess I am unable for the present to get away from it. But I do not see that you have made any use of inspiration. Your system seems to me only a system of rationalism, perhaps I should say, deism."

"We will not dispute about words," he replied. Nevertheless, I hold myself to be a supernaturalist as well as a rationalist, and I seem to myself to have a place for inspiration."

"What do you understand by inspiration, and what do you consider to be its office?"

"Your question is a short one, but it will require a long answer. Let me begin by saying, that men are prejudiced against inspiration, chiefly because they look upon it as an isolated fact, a sort of anomaly in our experience, without any analogy with the general and ordinary operations of the

human mind. But this I hold to be incorrect. Inspiration is an unquestionable fact of human experience, and, if I am not much mistaken, is as explicable as any other fact.

"A favorite author with unbelievers, Thomas Paine, somewhere says in his Age of Reason, Whoever is in the habit of looking into himself, must have observed that he has two classes of thoughts. We have one class of thoughts which spring up in our minds whenever we will to think of any particular subject; another class, which are involuntary, and come of their own accord. I am accustomed, he says, to treat these uninvited visiters with great respect; for I have learned that from them we obtain the most valuable part of our knowledge. I quote from memory and doubtless do not give his exact words, but I give his thought. Now, if I mistake not, here is a recognition of certain facts which will aid us to a right conception of inspiration.

"You will please to call to mind what I have heretofore said of the reason. It is our only source of light. But reason I have demonstrated to be absolute, Divine. It is then superhuman, supernatural. Now, the reason has, as Paine implies in the passage quoted, not only a voluntary activity, but a spontaneous activity. It not only acts when we by our wills call it into action, as when we will to think upon any particular subject; but it enters into activity of its own accord. That we all have

thoughts and ideas which spring up in our minds without any effort of volition on our part, is what I think we must all have at times more or less distinctly noted.

"When you first doubted, first began to inquire, you had already, in your mind, the ideas you questioned. You had the belief in your own existence, in the existence of nature, and in that of God. You cannot even remember when you had not this belief. This belief was not of your own procuring. You had no agency in placing the ideas it implies in your mind. You may observe also that you began your intellectual life, not by denying, but by affirming. By what power did you affirm your own existence, that of nature, and that of God? Surely not by reflection. For when you began to reflect, this primitive affirmation was the subject-matter of your reflection.

"What I have affirmed of you I may affirm of the race. The race does not begin by reflecting, denying, and reasoning itself into conviction. It must believe something before it can deny, have ideas before it can reflect on them. Go back to the infancy of the race, and what do you discover? Doubt, reflection, philosophy? Not at all. The language of the primitive ages is affirmative: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth:' 'God said let there be light, and there was light.' You are struck with the strength of faith you find, the undoubting confidence with which

the mass affirm, what you and I should hesitate long before assenting to.

"From these and other facts with which I will not trouble you now, I infer that the human mind begins by affirmation, by faith, not by doubt. Now, the reflective reason or reason put into activity by our volitions, always begins by doubt, and proceeds by reflection, by reasoning. Its instruments are observation and logic. But in the infancy of the race, in the early chronicles of mankind, we find no employment of these instruments. Men see but they do not observe, believe but do not reason. Logic is not properly constituted till we have an Aristotle.

"Now this primitive affirmation by the race, and even by the individual, as it could not have been the result of reflection, must have been by virtue of the spontaneous activity of the intelligence, the reason acting by its own energy. Now the truths we affirm on the authority of the spontaneous activity of the reason, we do not and cannot ascribe to ourselves. We are conscious that in the revelation of these truths we have taken no part. We have done nothing. We do not seem to ourselves to have any agency in the matter. We do not affirm what we affirm on our own authority. We therefore ascribe it to God, and call it inspiration, revelation.

This primitive affirmation, prior to reflection, to all observation and reasoning, of the great princi-

ples of human faith, principles which lie at the bottom of all spiritual life, and form the subject-matter of all after mental action, is what the human race has always understood by inspiration. And in this you and I now see that they have been right. The reason we have identified with God. In reflection it is indeed subjected to the infirmities of the flesh; but in its spontaneous action, it acts independently of us, and is of course free from our imperfections. It acts then by virtue of its Divine energy, and its revelations are real revelations from God.

"Those in whom this spontaneous activity is more remarkable than in the majority, seem to the multitude to be admitted more immediately into the secrets of the Almighty. They are therefore called the inspired, by way of eminence, and are looked upon as the confidants and interpreters of God. They are the priests, the prophets of mankind. Their chants become oracles, and are treasured up as the Sacred Word of God. Their laws and institutions are received as divine, and reverenced as religion.

"Observe, also, that this spontaneous activity of the reason is always accompanied with a movement of the sensibility, with a great degree of enthusiasm. The prophet, therefore, always speaks in the language of enthusiasm. His prophecy is a chant, his revelation is a hymn, his language is poetry. In confirmation of my view, you may

remark, that poetry in all languages is older than prose. The sacred books of all nations — which are their earliest literature — are written in poetry. The Hebrews, who were remarkable for their religious character, have given us in their literature scarcely a single example of prose. The Homeric poems date beyond authentic history; we know not when their author flourished; but Grecian prose is comparatively recent. The early literature of all modern nations consists in national songs and ballads.

"I understand, then, by inspiration the spontaneous revelations of the reason; and I call these revelations Divine, because I hold the reason to be Divine. Its voice, is the voice of God, and what it reveals without any aid from human agency, is really and truly a Divine Revelation. They in whom this spontaneous reason is active in a high degree, raising them above their fellows into closer communion with God, are really and truly prophets of God. They know more of God and can tell us more of God than the rest of us. Rightly then are they reverenced as inspired messengers. Rightly too are their words received by the human race as authoritative, and respected as records of Divine revelations.

"This word inspiration is applied to more subjects than one, though always with the same radical idea. The poet is said to be inspired, and every genuine poet is inspired. The lyric poet is inspired

with a love of the lofty, the daring, the heroic, or the elegiac. A fire burns within him, kindles and exalts him, and he pours himself out in words which burn, exalt or melt the souls of his listeners. The descriptive poet is inspired with a more gentle and peaceful kind of inspiration. He is inspired by a sense of beauty in nature or in art, which he seeks to reproduce in his verse.

"There is no radical difference between this inspiration proper to the poet, and that of the prophet. The poet is inspired by God under the aspect of love, beauty, joy, sorrow, liberty, heroism; the prophet is inspired by God under the aspect of Sovereign, Father, Preserver, or Redeemer, and is moved by a sense of obedience, piety, sanctity, goodness. But in both it is one and the same God that inspires. The true poet utters as infallible truth in relation to the subject-matter of his song, as the prophet. The poems of the one are as authoritative, as far as they go, as the other's prophecies. Poetry, I ~~am aware, enjoys~~ no very ~~high reputation for truth, but~~ so far as it is genuine, it is the outspeaking of the Divinity, and embraces elements of universal truth. This explains why it is that the poet always commends himself to the universal mind, and his fame as his song is immortal.

"The prophet is the poet chanting the Divine. His soul is full of God, and he pours himself out in a stream of harmony on which float along the

unsearchable things of God. God moves in him and speaks through him. He does not speak from himself, from reflection, human foresight and calculation, but as he is moved by the Holy Ghost; and he utters merely the words given him to utter.

"The character the inspiration assumes is determined by the genius and temper of the individual inspired. This man is inspired by the idea of the beautiful, and his whole aim is to realize it. But his individual genius and temper determine whether he shall attempt to do it by chanting a poem, composing a melody, pronouncing an oration, writing a book or constructing a temple. Another man is filled with the idea of the Holy. He sees God everywhere and in all things. His soul is absorbed in God, and he becomes a David, an Isaiah, a Paul, a Fenelon, a Penn, a Swedenborg, an Oberlin.

"You may observe also that it is rare that one individual alone is inspired. The notion that God himself kindles up one man's torch, and that we all must go and light our tapers at that, is not to be received without some hesitation. Here I suppose I differ somewhat from the common view of inspiration. I cannot bring myself to believe that in any age or country the human race are wholly dependent for light and warmth on any one man. God places the fate of humanity in the hands of no one of her sons.

"This doctrine that only one or a few are inspired, and that the rest must go to them for light and warmth, is too near akin to the political doctrine which teaches that the mass must entrust themselves and their interests to the guidance of the enlightened few, to be wholly satisfactory to me. I always view with suspicion all doctrines which disinherit the masses and place them at the mercy of a few leaders. I believe God is impartial, that all his children share his love, and that he dispenses his favors alike to all. The opposite doctrine appears to me to be mischievous. It opens the door to the grossest abuses, and paves the way for the most intolerable tyranny.

"Nothing is more common, you know, than to find those who have no confidence in the people. Even the great and good Washington, though he loved the people, doubted whether they could be safely entrusted with so large a share of liberty as they are entrusted with by our political institutions. Alexander Hamilton, a no ordinary man, distrusts the people, and thinks we shall have to resort to monarchy at last; and almost any day you please you shall meet men who have the greatest regard for the good of mankind, a profound reverence for the dignity of human nature, and who seldom let pass an opportunity of speaking of the infinite worth of the human soul, as it exists even in the humblest of our race, who nevertheless have no confidence in the people. They

are afraid of crowds and look with a sort of contempt on the movements of multitudes. They have great confidence in the capacity of the people to be instructed, in their capacity of progress; but none in their spontaneous power of perceiving truth and obeying its impulses. The people must be instructed. The enlightened few must teach them; the favored few must go among them and by showing them examples of superior excellence stimulate them to virtue. Now all this, though it proceed from kind feeling, enlarged sympathies and generous hopes, is yet based on the notion that the few have means of knowledge, which the many have not, and that but for the light these favored few emit, the many would be in total darkness. The people have no light in themselves. Here and there you shall find a man who may be called a sun shining with his own light, but all the rest are mere planets and satellites, shining only as they are shined upon.

"Now I protest against this doctrine. The true light enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world. Every man has the true light in himself, and is a sun, and not a planet. If the masses are not aware of this, the reason perhaps may be found in the fact that they are in the habit of looking outward not inward. Each man, instead of looking into himself for light looks abroad, and up to some great man, learned man, or, what is worse still, to some rich man.

"The impression has been very general, per-

haps at times universal, that the people need rulers, guides, nursing fathers and nursing mothers. Out of this has grown up aristocracies, monarchies, despotisms, tyrannies. From the earliest ages of history the few have struggled to save the people from themselves. The people, it is said, are ignorant, rash, and if entrusted with their own concerns, will assuredly ruin themselves. Hence it is always for the people's good that the few govern them; and when governing them in the worst possible manner, overwhelming them with taxes and reducing them to complete slavery, it has still been for their good. Although perverting their consciences, and corrupting their manners by the false maxims and licentious examples of courts, it has all been for the people's good. Now, this could never have been but for the prevalence of the notion that the many have merely the capacity of receiving light, and none of originating it; that the many are therefore incapable of taking care of themselves, but must entreat the noble few to take care of them.

"The same notion introduced into our religious faith has been attended by consequences still more revolting to a true lover of his race. The notion that only a few are religiously inspired, that God reveals his purposes only to a few chosen witnesses, and appoints these to reveal them to the people, has built up priesthoods, given a basis to priestcraft, and brought the human race into bon-

dage to sacerdotal corporations. If the masses who bowed with all reverence to the priest, had not believed that he possessed means of communicating with the gods which they did not, would they have submitted to his exactions? Every priesthood is built up on the idea that God reveals himself only to a few, and that these few are to be the teachers of the world. The priest having once made the notion prevail that he was more in God's secrets than the mass, and that they had no means of knowing God but through him, was able to impose upon them almost at will.

"The vast amount of wretched cant and fulsome panegyric, which disgusts the enlightened mind and correct taste, in regard to the Bible, comes from the same source. Why do men cry out so vehemently against every one who advances a doctrine not found in the Bible, or not taken directly from it? Simply because they suppose the authors of the Bible were specially illuminated in order to be in their turn the special illuminators of the world. The Jewish nation was instructed that it might instruct other nations. Peter, James, John and Paul were taught the truth by God himself, that they might teach it to others. This and all coming ages are therefore entirely dependent on a single book for all true knowledge of God. Alas for man, then, if by any wickedness the book should be corrupted, or by any accident destroyed! Alas, too, for the nations who receive not this

book, have never heard of it, and had no means of hearing of it! They are all in darkness, wandering in the wilderness with not a single star even to break through the thick clouds and guide them by its feeble light to their home.

"Now, people may say what they will, priests anathematize as they may, and statesmen utter as many old saws as they please, but I for one protest with the whole energy of my being, by all my reverence for God, and by all my love for mankind against a doctrine pregnant with such disastrous consequences. I shall not be a convert to it, till I become able to go all lengths in upholding priestcraft and kingcraft.

"I value books, and of all books I value the Bible the most; I value the services of great and good men; and I yield to no man in my readiness to receive instructions from those above me; but I will not own that any man has any means of knowing God, man and man's destiny, which I have not also. If there be that in any man by virtue of which he has the right to call himself priest or king, there is also that in every man by virtue of which he has the same right. The Gospel aims to make all men kings and priests. Every man is a man if he chooses to be, and has in himself all that he needs in order to be a man in the full significance of the term; and therefore no one has any occasion to borrow a part of his manship from his brother.

"But do not infer from this that I hold all to be inspired in an equal degree. Reason is in all men, and it acts spontaneously in all men. All men then are inspired to a certain extent, and hence the power of all to apprehend the inspiration of each. But the reason is not active to the same degree in all men. No doubt some feel it more vividly than others, and have a clearer view of God, and duty. They are therefore undoubtedly capacitated to take the lead, to go before the multitude. But all have a kindred inspiration, and are merely younger brothers. They are members of the same family, and equal heirs, though not the elder members, nor the first to come into possession of their inheritance.

"Neither will you understand me to deny that one man may aid another. In whatever requires observation, in science and philosophy, one may undoubtedly be of great service to another, and even to the world. Plato, Aristotle, Des Cartes, Bacon, Locke, have not lived in vain, nor spent their strength for nought. The human race is greatly their debtor. But in all that concerns first principles each mind has the light in itself. The great office of the teacher, the principal mission of books, is to turn the mind in upon itself, and induce it to look with clear vision and reverent feeling upon the light ever shining there.

"Inspiration rarely manifests itself in single minds alone. It may sometimes do it; but in

general it manifests itself in the masses, and is called the spirit of the age. Christianity was an inspiration in this sense. The age in which it broke out was inspired. It was in fact a spontaneous outbreak of the common mind, the outspeaking of God moving in the midst of the people. It found in Jesus its first clear and distinct utterance, in Paul its first philosophic interpreter, who gave it a fixed formula, and founded the church. Yet not in the mind of Jesus only was there this inspiration. Other minds and hearts as well as his were travailing with the Divine Idea of Immortality; and when his ministers went forth to preach it, they did but reveal the multitude to themselves. They merely gave voice and form to what was already in the minds and hearts of their hearers. Hence their power, the success of their preaching, and the conversion of the world.

"Ordinarily when the time has come for a new doctrine to be brought out and incorporated into the common belief of mankind, you find everywhere persons springing up, independent of each other, with a strong faith in it, and an invincible zeal in its defence. A new virtue is to be realized and practised by the race; all the world seem carried away in its direction. The staid and sober few who may remain unaffected, may oppose themselves to the general current, but all in vain. Conservatives may sneer, reason, declaim, nick-

name, call the defenders of the new virtue, disorganizers, enemies of God and man, but all to no purpose. On they sweep by a power not their own, which they comprehend not, and which they do not even seek to comprehend. In all other respects than this one, they may be wrong, and even destructive. No matter. There is no resisting them. Old institutions, old manners, old customs, old modes of thought, men and women counted wise and prudent, all are before them as the chaff of the summer threshing floor before the wind, — are swept away or trampled under foot as on the multitude presses to the realization of the idea with which it is inspired. To the mere spectator this multitude may appear as the Apostles did to some on the day of Pentecost, when 'others mocking, said, These men are filled with new wine.' In this way the Christian idea of Immortality became predominant; in this same way the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer was established, and the church founded; in this same way was instituted the Commonwealth in England, and the Republic in France; and this same way all important revolutions or reforms in the faith or practice of mankind will be effected."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BIBLE.

"I FIND nothing in particular to object to your views of inspiration. I see very clearly that you have a right to call yourself a supernaturalist as well as a rationalist. But I confess that I do not see how, on the ground you have assumed, you can maintain the special inspiration of the authors of the Bible. Why were not Homer, Socrates, Plato, Milton, Rousseau, inspired as well as David, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Paul?"

"If, instead of the word *special*, you used the word *exclusive*, I would admit your objection. I do not contend for the exclusive inspiration of the Bible writers, but I do contend for their special inspiration."

"But you do not admit them to be inspired in the same sense the Christian world does."

"Of that I am not so certain. There is a looseness, a vagueness in most men's notions which render it extremely difficult to tell precisely what they are. Give precision to the prevailing ideas of inspiration entertained by the Christian world,

express them in clear and definite terms, and I think they will be found to be the same with mine. It has never been a doctrine of the church that none but the writers of the Bible were illuminated by the Spirit of God. Some of the early Greek Fathers contended for the reality of the inspiration of the Gentile sages. They say that it is by the inspirations of one and the same *logos* or reason, that an Isaiah prophesies, a Homer sings, and a Euclid solves mathematical problems. Paul assures us that 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal.' Job declares that 'there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.' John bears witness to a 'true light which enlighteneth *every* man that cometh into the world.' Jesus promises the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who was to abide with us forever, and who should lead us into all truth. Moreover the church has always, in some form or other, held to the reality of the inner Light. Always has it held to the doctrine of experimental religion, and in experimental religion it contends for an illumination of the understanding, by the Spirit of God, as well as for a purification of the affections. So the exclusive inspiration of the Bible-writers has never been a doctrine of the church. I do not then, in reality, depart from what has ever been accounted orthodoxy, when I assert that God reveals himself to all men. What else in fact has the church meant by

its doctrine of 'common grace?' What else has it meant by the assertion that the Spirit of God strives with all men?

"But while I contend, that in a certain sense God reveals himself to all men, and that all therefore are really and truly inspired, I also admit that individuals may be specially inspired; that is, inspired in a more eminent degree, than the many. These individuals are admitted into a closer intimacy, if I may so speak, with the All-wise and All-holy, and therefore are able to tell us more of God, and to be better interpreters of his will. Now ordinarily we call none inspired, save those who are inspired in an eminent degree. These alone are called *the* inspired; these alone are the prophets of God. This is what produces the seeming discrepancy between my views and those of the church. But the discrepancy is only seeming, not real. I too call these individuals *the* inspired; I too call them prophets of God, in a sense in which I do not others.

"Now, bear in mind, that we have determined the spontaneous reason, — that is, reason acting independently of our wills, — to be supernatural, divine. This reason is in all men. Hence, the universal beliefs of mankind, the universality of the belief in God and religion. Hence, too, the power of all men to judge of supernatural revelations. All are able to detect the supernatural, because all have the supernatural in them-

selves. Were it not so, we could detect God in no miracle, we could recognise him in none of his works, and could receive no revelation of him. Inasmuch as the reason taken in its independence is absolute, is supernatural, its spontaneous revelations are supernatural, superhuman.

"Bear in mind, also, that some individuals experience more of the workings of the supernatural reason than do the many. God is revealed to them more fully than he is to the world. These, according to the common mode of speaking, are the inspired, the prophets of God. Their words are words of God, as we have seen, and are for that reason authoritative. Now the Bible I hold to be written by individuals of this description. It is a record which the inspired prophets of the Hebrew nation, have left us of the revelations of God which they had received. This, if I mistake not, is the doctrine of the church, and if I understand myself it harmonizes with the doctrine I have contended for on inspiration.

"I know but two methods of arriving at truth; one by reflection, the other by the inspiration of God. That is, we attain to truth by its spontaneous revelations, or by the slow and painful process of analysis and induction. In the last case we ourselves work, and often to no effect. In the first, as I have shown over and over again, it is God that works. Now, I see in the Bible-writers very few marks of analysis and induction. These

writers do not attain to the truths they utter by reasoning, by philosophizing. The truths they utter, they receive as flashes of lightning, and hence it is that they utter them as it were with 'tongues of fire.' Being truths of the universal reason, truths transcending time and space, they commend themselves to all, and seem to address themselves to every man, and 'in his own tongue wherein he was born.' But when you read Plato and Cicero, you see the marks of reflection. These men you see are able philosophers, and have attained to much truth; but they are not prophets; they do not speak with authority. Their words are not the original words of God, but an attempted interpretation and verification of the original words of God. They make no revelation to you of new or hidden truths; but merely account to you for certain beliefs you already entertain. Here is the difference between the two classes of writers to which you have referred me.

"Then again the writers of the Bible are specially inspired in another sense. Rousseau was not without inspiration, but his was not a peculiarly religious inspiration. His inspiration was of another kind. He was inspired with the idea of Nature, as contradistinguished from artificiality, or conventionalism. His mission was to break down the old social fabric and to lay the foundations of a new social order, more in accordance with the nature

of man and of things. But the Bible-writers are inspired by God under the aspect religion more especially contemplates him. They are inspired with God as the Holy, as the object of veneration and worship, and as this is the highest view we can take of God, they are more especially prophets of God. There is a passage in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, which throws some light on the doctrine I would set forth. 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God, which worketh all and in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another faith; to another the gifts of healing; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh — or are effected by — that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will.'*

"Nations and individuals are inspired in relation to special purposes, for the performance of some special work in the general progress of Humanity.

The Jews were chosen by the Spirit to bring out

* 1 Cor. vii. 4—11.

and perfect the religious element of man's nature; the Greeks had the mission of developing the philosophical element, and of realizing the idea of the Beautiful; Rome, that of bringing out the patriotic element, and of founding law or jurisprudence. In like manner each of these general divisions of the great work of human progress is subdivided among individuals. In relation to the religious element, to Moses is assigned one work, to David another, and to Isaiah still another. In relation to the philosophical element, one task is allotted to a Socrates, another to a Plato, and still another to an Aristotle. So I might say in regard to all the other elements of human nature. The Spirit requires not one man to do the whole, but subdivides and distributes the work among nations and individuals according to his own pleasure. Every man then who is called to a particular work, is specially inspired. And as religion is the highest of all, as the religious element in fact embraces all the other elements of our nature, they who are specially inspired to bring out the religious element, are inspired with a mission so much higher than all others, that they alone seem worthy to be called the inspired. The writers of the Bible having this kind of inspiration, being inspired for the accomplishment of this mission, are therefore specially inspired; and stand not only in the first rank of the inspired, but in a rank by themselves above all others."

"But do you believe everything written in the Bible is true?"

"Your question is a broad one, and is not easily answered; because no one man can tell precisely all that is actually written in the Bible. The mere words of the Bible are nothing. We must look at what is actually meant. Now, I know no man who is able in all cases to say what is actually meant by the Bible-writers, whose experience is wide and various enough to interpret all they have said. Therefore I hold it the part of the wise man to be silent in some cases, and neither profess to believe nor to disbelieve. It will be time enough for him to accept or reject, when he is sure that he understands."

"From all of which I am to understand that there are some things in the Bible which you do not believe."

"Rather that there are some matters in it which I do not profess to be able to understand. I certainly would not, in all cases even where I do understand, abide by the mere letter. I certainly would not take it upon myself to defend all the laws ascribed to Moses, as so many divine institutions in the absolute sense of the term; but I would contend strenuously for the Divine inspiration of Moses, and for the truth of the great principles he sought to embody in his legislation."

"What say you of the marvellous stories called miracles with which the Bible is filled?"

"The first question with regard to these miracles is, did they actually take place? I can assign no reasons *a priori* why they should not have taken place. Nature is but God's will, and he is not bound by what we term its laws; for its laws are himself. Therefore there was nothing to hinder him from performing them, if he chose. Also the general canons of historical criticism, which I adopt in all other cases, seem to require me to admit them. I cannot persuade myself that the universal belief in miracles is wholly an error. I could not so believe without depriving myself of all ground of certainty. Then the miracles of the New Testament are so interwoven with the texture of the narrative, and make up so essential a part of it, that I cannot deny them, without casting suspicion on the whole narrative itself. And I cannot reject the narrative itself, without departing from the principles of historical evidence which I find myself compelled to admit everywhere else.

"The second question in regard to the miracles is, are they genuine miracles? That is, were they actually performed by the power of God, or were they mere tricks of jugglery? This question is not to be answered in the gross, but in detail. Each individual miracle is to be taken on its own bottom, and to be judged by itself. This we are able to do, because, as I have shown, we have in us an element of the supernatural. Therefore, there is in us a power of detecting God intuitively.

If we detect the presence of God in the miracle, we are to term it an actual miracle. This I think I can do, at least, in some of the alleged miracles. I therefore contend for the genuineness of at least a portion of the miracles recorded in the Bible."

"Do you use the miracles as proofs of the revelation?"

"No. Because the evidence I have of the truth of the revelation, is stronger than that which I have of the fact that the miracles actually took place. The miracles rest on historical testimony, the weakest kind of testimony; the truth of the revelation rests on the testimony of a witness I have within. I do not use them as proofs, because I have as much ability to detect the presence of God in a moral doctrine as I have in the display of physical power. If I know nothing of God, I cannot detect him in the extraordinary display of physical power; if I know enough of him to detect him in the miracle, I must needs know enough of him to detect him in the doctrine, and therefore I do not need the miracle."

"What then is the use of miracles?"

"I do not know what was the actual purpose for which they were wrought; nor do I know what purpose they actually served. I can conceive, however, of a purpose they might have answered, and there is a use I can make of them now. As to the purpose they might have served: Mankind, especially when but partially enlightened, are much

more attracted by extraordinary displays of physical power, than by the exhibition of moral grandeur. Had Jesus, for instance, appeared in the simple dress of a Jewish peasant from the obscure village of Nazareth, out of which it was proverbially said no good thing could come, whatever had been the purity of his life, the truth and excellence of his doctrines, he would hardly have secured a single listener. The miracles he performed, therefore, were necessary to draw attention to him, and induce people to listen to him. To the simple peasant-teacher nobody would have paid any attention. But from the man who could cast out devils, open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, enable the lame to walk and cause the dumb to sing, who could still the raging tempest, and compel the grave to yield up the dead to life, they could not so easily turn away. Here was something extraordinary; here was a wonderful man, what had he got to say?

"Again, you cannot have failed to observe how prone men are to regard nature as possessed of causative power. Nature moves on so harmoniously, with so much regularity and uniformity, that we are exceedingly liable to regard all her phenomena as the effects of her own independent causality; thus stopping at second causes and virtually banishing God from the universe. Now it seems necessary that this order, this uniformity should at times be broken through, so that we may

see that an omnipotent Will rules in the affairs of the world; that there is a God who holds nature in his hand and does with it as he pleases. Miracles, which are interruptions of the natural course of events, occurring at distant intervals, seem to me admirably calculated to produce this effect, to raise men's minds from second causes to the First Cause, and to show them that nature is but what He wills.

"There is another use of miracles, or rather of the events termed miracles, which I can make. I may regard them as so many symbols, each covering a great truth, or an important moral lesson. This use of them, is, perhaps, the principal one to be made of them now, and it is affected by no theory we may adopt as to their having actually occurred. Take as an illustration of what I mean, the miracle of the resurrection. I of course admit the miracle in its literal sense. But suppose I could not make it out that the body of Jesus actually rose, yet the great lesson taught us by the story of the resurrection remains unimpaired. Jesus was engaged in a great work, that of the complete and final redemption of man from every species of thraldom. In this work he encountered opposition, he was taken and crucified, buried in a new tomb, closed up and guarded with armed soldiery; but on the third day he rose from the dead, and after a few days ascended in triumph to God. So runs the narrative.

"Now for the moral. The defenders of the

truth may be poor and few in number, they may be despised, persecuted and put to death. Their cause may seem crushed to the earth, and destroyed forever. But it is not dead. It shall rise again. It shall burst the cerements of the grave, strike to the earth the armed bands of its enemies, and rise on high and shine forth in Divine glory and majesty. And is it not so. The earth has been strown with the dead bodies of the defenders of Liberty, and yet not one drop of blood has been spilt in vain. The cause has always risen from the grave, and been always marching onwards to victory. An obscure individual utters a great idea; the kings of the earth conspire against him, his feeble band of followers are dispersed, but the idea is immortal, is unconquerable, and rises from the dust of the battle-field, where it was supposed to be left with the slain, prepared for new battles and ultimate victory. Here is a truth precious to all the friends of humanity. It breathes the breath of life into the reformer, enables him to stand up undaunted against a world. What though I am alone, and of the people there is none with me? what though ye scoff and sneer at me? what though ye rage and vent your spite at me? Rage on, do your worst. Ye may silence my tongue, palsy my arm, crush my body, and seal me up in a new tomb hewn from the rock. What then? Ye cannot touch the holy cause in which I am engaged. I speak for God, for man, and my words shall echo through

eternity; before the truths I utter ye shall yet grow pale and tremble; nay, bow down and worship. Here is the moral of the resurrection. Cherish it all ye who love your race, and know that in the sacredness of your cause ye are immortal and invincible."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CHURCH.

"PASSING over the Bible, what is your view of the church?"

"The object of Jesus was to found a spiritual kingdom on earth; that is, to bring all mankind under the dominion of the great ethical and religious principles he set forth, all of which an Apostle sums up in the terms, 'righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' A kingdom of this kind must needs have its throne in the conscience and the affections, and is therefore by its very nature internal and invisible. The true church of Christ, the true catholic church, I hold therefore to be not an outward, visible church, but an inward and invisible church.

"Nevertheless the internal must needs have an outward, visible symbol. It must manifest itself in the outward organization of mankind. In the past it has been able to do this only by means of an organization separate from the civil or political organization; that is, by a separation of church and state. But I do not find that Jesus contem-

plated this double organization of mankind. In strictness he allows but a single organization. The state should be a church. That is, the state should be organized in perfect accordance with the great principles of truth and righteousness which constitute the internal church, and then no other organization of mankind would be needed, or in fact admissible. The time before this can be done will be long. Mankind are yet suffering from the evils, which have resulted from the union of church and state; that is, by the alliance of the two organizations, and they must very generally regard what I am contending for as a renewal of the same. They cannot as yet understand the difference between a union of church and state, and the unity, or identity, of church and state. So we must wait patiently. All will come right in due time."

"But I am more particularly interested in the doctrines of the church. In order to be a Christian must I embrace all these mysterious, absurd or conflicting dogmas, the church has contended for?"

"My friend, Mr. Howard, who never troubles himself with the dogmas of the church, will tell you that in order to be a Christian, all you need is to live the life of Jesus."

"Certainly," remarked Mr. Howard, who that instant came in. "I see little good which comes from mere doctrinal discussions. I find men very

much the same under all creeds and under none. Tell me a man's creed, and I must still inquire what are his morals. I care little about modes of faith. Give me a good life, patterned after the life of Jesus, and I am satisfied."

"So am I," replied Mr. Morton. "Nevertheless, ideas are not to be thought lightly of. There are great problems relating to God, to man, and his relations to God, to man's duty and destiny, which it is very important should be solved; and I must believe one's character is essentially affected by the solutions he adopts. I am far from condemning zeal for the faith, and I confess that I prefer bigotry, and even the most violent persecution for opinion's sake, to mere indifference to all opinions. True liberality is at an infinite remove from indifference. Liberality does not prohibit one from valuing his own faith, from regarding it as superior to all others, and of infinite importance to the welfare of the soul; but it consists in allowing to all men the same right to form their own opinions, and to propagate and defend them, which we claim for ourselves.

"For my own part, my philosophy teaches me to be very slow in dissenting from opinions which have been embraced by any considerable portions of my fellow men. The fact that a given doctrine has been widely believed, and earnestly contended for, is to me a presumption that it covers some truth, or an aspect of some truth, essential to the

complete intellectual life of man. I then do not attempt to reject and disprove, but to comprehend and verify; and I count not myself to have rightly comprehended a doctrine till I have seen it in a light in which my reason approves it.

"It is undoubtedly no easy matter to get at the precise truth or aspect of truth covered by a particular doctrine. My method is to interrogate my own consciousness. All doctrines cover a fact of consciousness, or are designed to meet some want of the soul or understanding. I attempt then by a scrupulous analysis of human nature, to find what is the fact which the doctrine in question is designed to cover, or the want it is intended to meet. When I have discovered this fact, or this want, I take it for granted that I have discovered all that is essential in the doctrine. Undoubtedly in this analysis I may err; I may overlook some fact; I may not reduce a given fact to its lowest denomination; and I may misinterpret the facts I do discover. But I must be as honest and faithful as I can, and do all in my power to guard against error. To this end I must proceed slowly, and not be hasty in rushing to conclusions. I must go over the ground often, and review, and re-review my work till I have attained to all the exactness in my power.

"In a work of this kind I have been engaged for some years. When I have completed it to my own satisfaction, I hope to be able to give the

world the results. But as yet I am a learner. Every day enlarges my experience and developes new wants within me, which essentially modify my former conclusions. Where I shall end, I know not now. But the more I inquire, the more deep and varied becomes my experience, the more confidence do I acquire in the experiences recorded in the Bible, and the more willing do I become to trust them where my own is imperfect or doubtful.

"On the great leading points of Christian faith I have attained to what I deem well-grounded convictions, and these convictions, so far as I can myself judge, are substantially the same with those which the church has always contended for. How far the church will receive my expositions, I know not, and care not. I agree with it in the main as to what it actually believes, but I differ from it often as to the account it gives of its faith. I accept its faith, but not always its philosophy, what it really means, though I sometimes reject its interpretations.

"The great error of different sects is not in the fact that they embrace false doctrines, but defective doctrines. What they have is true, as far as it goes, but is not the whole truth. Each sect has a truth, and is so intent on maintaining that truth, that it overlooks others equally essential. The Calvinist has a great truth, — the sovereignty of God. He would introduce this truth everywhere.

God is to him an absolute sovereign, who disposes of all things as he pleases, makes one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor; has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth. This is all true. But there is another truth which the Calvinist overlooks, — the free agency of man. He is so intent on exalting God, and extending the sphere of the Divine action, that he leaves man out of the account.

"The Arminian, on the other hand, struck with the fact that man after all must count for something, plants himself on man's free agency. In his efforts to exalt man, and give him his proper sphere of activity, he overlooks the divine agency, and virtually annihilates God. Now both build on real facts; for God is absolute sovereign, and man is free. Both facts must be accepted. Man's freedom must be so interpreted as to leave God's sovereignty complete, and God's sovereignty must be so interpreted as to leave man's ability unimpaired.

"The believer in endless punishment is struck with the fact of God's justice. He recognises the fact which our reason discloses, that no man should be suffered to sin with impunity. God is just. He is of purer eyes than to look on sin with the least allowance or approbation. He will therefore by no means clear the guilty. So intent is the believer in endless punishment on this fact, that he does not sufficiently consider that God is also a

God of love and mercy. The Universalist seizes upon this latter fact which he exaggerates and so interprets as virtually to exclude the idea of justice. Both are right, and both are wrong. But the two ideas are easily enough reconciled. The Universalist does not object to man's receiving the consequences which, in the order of Providence, necessarily follow transgression; nor will the believer in endless misery deem it unjust that a man, when he has ceased to sin and become holy, should receive the rewards of holiness. Then assume that God will never place a man in any condition in which he cannot repent, and become holy if he will, and all controversy must cease. If the man sins eternally, let him be damned eternally; if he repent and becomes holy, whenever the event may occur, let him, as he must from the very state of his soul, enjoy God and heaven.

"The Trinitarian contends for the Deity of the Son and Spirit, and in doing this he overlooks to some extent the fact of God's unity, that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are but one God. The Unitarian, takes up the idea of unity which the Trinitarian neglects, and looks so steadily on this, that he fails to see that this one God exists as a Trinity. We ought to be careful that our explanations of the Trinity do not impair the idea of unity, and we should so understand the unity of God as to leave room for the admission of his threefold existence."

"And how is this to be done?"

"I can give you now only one way of doing it. I might remark that if you supposed God to be a mere unity, an absolute unity, you could never get at multiplicity; consequently you could never arrive at creation. God is not a mere barren unity, dwelling in eternal solitude, but he manifests himself in variety. Now in order to do this he must be both one and many, finite and infinite. He must then be one and many, and their relation. Here is a Trinity which you will find in the reason, implied in every assertion, and in every thought. But on this I cannot now dwell. I look at God as the Ground of all existence, the Source whence all life and being proceed, and I call him the Father. I look again at this same God, as manifested, or uttered, that is, put forth, and I call it the Word, or Son. I look once more at this same God as a vivifying and sanctifying Spirit, preserving nature and giving it its life, enlightening the soul and sanctifying it, and I call it the Holy Ghost. Here are to my mind three obvious distinctions, each of which is God, and all three of which are one and the same God.

"The doctrine of the Atonement has excited not a little controversy. Still I think the doctrine is founded in truth. Christianity addresses man as a sinner and it seeks his recovery, his reconciliation and union with God.

"Now I apprehend that man everywhere has the consciousness of sin. The tradition of a prim-

itive Fall is nearly if not quite universal. No man feels that he stands in his proper relation to God. Every one feels that he has sinned against God, and has fallen from his primitive innocence, and lost the Divine favor. Now this is not a state in which a man is willing to live; for say what we will, man has a conscience, and one that makes itself heard too, at least sometimes. Nothing is so painful to man, so insupportable, as the consciousness that he is a sinner. Let me but feel that I have held fast to my integrity, that I have walked ever by the law of God, and have nothing wherewith to reproach myself, and I can smile even at the stake. But when once I am obliged to confess to myself that I am a sinner, and can no longer look upon myself but with a sort of loathing, I am miserable indeed. I already feel the tortures of the damned; the flames of hell are already burning within me, and I have not one drop of water with which to cool my parched tongue. I cannot live in this state.

"But this is only half of the evil. Sin makes me a coward. Adam, after his transgression, comes not forth to meet his God, but seeks to conceal himself among the trees. When I have the consciousness of sin, I am afraid to meet God. I think he must be angry with me. I have a fearful looking for of wrath and indignation. God is my enemy and he can crush me. My own heart condemns me, and God is greater than my heart.

"As a sinner I need two things; first, that which shall wash out my sins, save me from the tortures of a guilty conscience, and make me holy; and second, that which shall restore me to the favor of God which I feel I must have lost, save me from his wrath, and make him again my friend. Now here are two deep wants of the human soul to be met. They are universal wants as I learn from the fact that men in all ages and countries of the world, in all times and places, have sought to provide for them. Sometimes by sacrifices and offerings, and sometimes by self-inflicted penance, lacerations of the body, the sacrifice of the objects dearest to the affections, or by voluntary submission to poverty and want. The rites and ceremonies and disciplines of all religions have this end in view. The Jewish economy was, to a great extent, proposed as a means of saving the soul from sin and reconciling it to God. To this end were its fasts, its ablutions, oblations and sacrifices.

"But the blood of bulls, of rams and he-goats, cannot wash away guilt and atone for sin. The injunctions of the Jewish law were inadequate. By the deeds which that law enjoined no flesh could be justified. Those deeds could not purge the conscience and make the comers thereunto perfect.

"Christianity proposes itself as the sovereign remedy. It offers us the atonement. But what ac-

cording to christianity is the atonement? Through all religions you find runs the idea of sacrifice. Man has never felt it possible to atone for sin and gain the favor of God without a sacrifice. But the sacrifice enjoined by all religions previous to christianity were insufficient, and could not secure the justification, much less the sanctification of the sinner. The sacrifice christianity enjoins, is therefore different in kind from that enjoined by any other religion. What it is may be inferred from a passage in the prophet Micah: 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'* A just God can accept only the just, and to be reconciled to God we must come into harmony with him, possess in ourselves a godly spirit or disposition. The real sacrifice then enjoined by christianity is a self-sacrifice. We are to present ourselves to God a living sacrifice. The literal death of Jesus, viewed as detached from its connexions and moral influence, does not either save us from our own guilt, or

* Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

bring us into union with God. This the church has always asserted, in asserting that in order to effect our salvation there must be a practical application of the atonement. The individual must become really and personally holy, and then and not till then, will God accept him, and blot out the remembrance of his transgression. This is the real Christian doctrine of atonement stated in its philosophical nakedness.

"But if you go back to the age in which the Gospel was first promulgated, you will readily perceive that the doctrine in this naked form could not have met its wants, nor in fact can it meet the want of the great majority of our own generation. The mass could not so refine upon the matter, nor appreciate a doctrine apparently so dry and abstract. Here they were, tortured with guilt and trembling before a stern and inexorable Judge. What should they do? Assure us, say they, that God will pardon us. Mercy, mercy, we want mercy. Do you doubt? Behold then the cross. See there, nailed to the accursed tree, the Son of God. If God has not refused to give you up his only begotten and well-beloved Son to die for you, shall he refuse to pardon you? Behold his infinite compassion for sinners, and dare trust his mercy.

"Go again with the doctrine of the atonement in its philosophic formula to the northern barbarians who overran the Roman empire, and talk to them of the necessity of personal holiness, and of

being godlike in their dispositions; of the importance of self-sacrifice, and walking according to the rules of right reason, and what impression will you make? The spiritual nature in them is unawakened; they live in the senses and not in the spirit. Would you humanize them and purify and exalt their sentiments, you must have something to strike their imaginations, and touch their sensibility. Point your ruthless barbarian, on whose heart mercy has never gleamed, to the cross: let him see there a bleeding and agonizing God, a God dying that man might live, and his rough soul is touched, and tears stream down his weather-beaten cheeks. What a sinner am I, that I have caused God to come down and die on the cross that I might live?

"That the Christian doctrine of atonement might meet the wants of the human race, and be efficient in reconciling them to God, it was necessary that it should be presented in its symbolic form. It has been so presented, and well is it that it has been. Nevertheless, the church must suffer those of us who wish, to interpret the symbol. The death of Jesus is symbolic of the great fact, that sin is washed out and the atonement realized only by giving up ourselves to God, and by being ready, able and willing to live and die for man as Jesus did. This great fact is what the church has always been striving after, and it has done it in the only way in which it has been able to do it. You must speak to men in their own language. You

do not tell men the truth, when you undertake to tell it to them in a language of which they are ignorant.

"About the doctrine of regeneration, also, the Christian world has disputed. I conceive, however, that the matter may be easily settled. Pelagius recognised in man a certain degree of ability to effect his own salvation. Saint Augustine denied human ability, and represented salvation as wholly of God.

"Now, on the one hand, man is unquestionably fallen, and has not the ability to recover himself. I am conscious that I am not sufficient to effect my own redemption. I feel the need of assistance. On the other hand, I am equally conscious that I possess some ability. I have two sources of recuperative energy,—my reason and my will. My affections and tastes are corrupted, but I am still able to see the right and to will it. But this is not enough. Though I see the good, and resolve to pursue it, I am drawn by my lusts into sin. These are the facts of consciousness.

"Now what I want is, that my body should be brought into subjection to the law of my mind, that my affections and tastes should be so changed as to give me a relish for the food which endureth unto everlasting life. I may, as an unregenerate man, see the right, will it, and even do it, so far as its outward performance is concerned. But this is not enough. I must do it because I love it. God

says, 'My son, give me thy heart.' I must delight in the law of the Lord, and find my meat and drink in doing his will. Now the change by which this effect is produced in me, is what I understand by regeneration. But this change I do not effect. It is effected by the Spirit of God. Yet not without my concurrence and coöperation. I am a complex being. On one side of my nature I am passive, and on the other I am active. In the fact of regeneration I both act and am acted upon. There is a concurrence of both powers,—the Divine and the Human. You may not be able to tell precisely where grace ends and human ability begins, but you must beware that you do not so interpret the one as to exclude the other.

"Other doctrines I would remark upon, but I have talked till I am tired. You will gather, from what I have said, my general views of Christian doctrines, and my method of investigating them. Beware of exclusiveness. Beware of denying. Seek always to comprehend. Know that the human mind never embraces unmixed falsehood, and cannot believe a pure absurdity. Range freely over all doctrines, analyze them all, and what you find in them which accords with human nature, as you find it in your own experience, or in the records of the race, hold fast and cherish, for it is the truth of God and profitable to man."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now gone through with what I had to say respecting my intellectual struggles, in passing from infidelity to an unwavering belief in God and the supernatural origin of christianity. I have detailed with some minuteness and with as much accuracy as I could, the various arguments and views by which my recovery was effected.

I have always felt myself greatly indebted to my friends, Mr. Howard and Mr. Morton, for the aid they afforded me. The one gave me an exemplification of christianity in practical life, and won my love for it; the other showed me its foundation in my nature, and demonstrated its truth to my understanding. The more I pursued the course of reasoning Mr. Morton pointed out, the more clear and certain did the truth of christianity appear to my mind; and I am now fully satisfied that every man who becomes acquainted with the laws of his own reason, and the wants of his own soul, must be convinced that the religion of Jesus is true and from God.

The effect of this change in my belief on the temper of my mind and my general disposition, I am satisfied has been salutary. I have had much to contend with since as well as before; the current of my life has never run smooth; I have ever been in a false position, and I have had trials the world has little suspected; but I have generally maintained a calm and equable frame of mind, and been able to bear my burdens without being overwhelmed. I have seen a Providence in all things, and have felt that all the events of this world, whether great or small, were under the control of a wise Governor, who would cause all things to work together for good. I have often had to stand alone, and to contend single-handed against my Christian brethren; but I have been sustained because I felt I was right, and that God would never abandon those who were faithful to conscience and duty. The heavens have often been obscured by thick clouds, and the light of day has been shut out; but I have never doubted that there were a bright sun and clear blue sky beyond.

As to the particular views which I have adopted, their general character may be gathered from the conversations of my friend and teacher Mr. Morton. I have not, however, adhered blindly to his opinions. In some respects I have modified them, and often I have chosen, where I adopted them, to express them in different terms. His great object was to present christianity in a light which should enable

the unbeliever to see its truth. He found me an unbeliever, and he could not therefore talk to me as if I was already a believer. There can be no doubt, that had he been conversing with individuals whose faith was fixed, he would have used much more Scriptural language, and been less careful to point out the rational element of religion. But he had to adapt his language to my wants, to use a language I could understand; and which should enable me to see the coincidence between my own experience and that which I found recorded in the Bible. In this he did right, and so far as I was concerned he was signally successful; and must have been equally successful with any others who should have been in a like condition with myself.

In looking back upon the long struggle I have had, I must thank God for it. I have been reproached by my Christian brethren; they have tried to make me believe that I was very wicked in being an unbeliever; but I have never reproached myself for having been one, nor have I ever regretted it. I would consent to go through the whole again, rather than not have the spiritual experience I have thus acquired. I have sinned, but never in having doubted; I have much to answer for, but not for having been an unbeliever. I have no apologies to make to the Christian world. I have no forgiveness to ask of it. I have done it no disservice, and it will one day see that I have not been an unprofitable servant. It has never

fairly owned me, but I care not for that. Even to this day it calls me an infidel, but that is nothing. It will one day be astonished at its own blindness; and when freed from the flesh, in that world where I shall not be disturbed by the darkness of this, I shall see it doing even more than justice to my memory. I have not lived in vain, nor in vain have I doubted, inquired, and finally been convinced. When the scales fell from my eyes, and I beheld the true light I followed it; and I have done what was in my power to direct others to it. My task is now well nigh done, and I am ready to give in my last account. I say not this in a spirit of vain-boasting, but in humble confidence. I say it to express my strong faith in God, and in his care for all who attempt to do his will.

I doubt not that many good Christians may be shocked at first sight at what I have here recorded. They will see no coincidence between the views here set forth and their own cherished convictions; but I will assure them, that as they read on, and fairly comprehend them, they will find the coincidence all but perfect. The christianity here set forth is the christianity of the universal church, though presented perhaps in an uncommon light. I cannot persuade myself that a new christianity is here presented, but the old christianity which all the world has believed, under a new aspect, perhaps, and an aspect more peculiarly adapted to the wants of the present age. It cannot have

escaped general observation, that religion, for some time, has failed to exert that influence over the mind and heart that it should. There is not much open skepticism, not much avowed infidelity, but there is a vast amount of concealed doubt, and untold difficulty. Few, very few among us but ask for more certain evidence of the Christian faith than they possess. Many, many are the confessions to this effect, which I have received from men and women whose religious character stands fair in the eyes of the church. I have been told by men of unquestionable piety, that the only means they have to maintain their belief even in God, is never to suffer themselves to inquire into the grounds of that belief. The moment they ask for proofs, they say, they begin to doubt.

Our churches are but partially filled, and the majority of those who attend them complain that they are not fed. Our clergy are industrious, and in most cases do all that men can do, and yet not many mighty works do they, because of the people's unbelief. Everywhere we hear complaint. Even amongst the clergy themselves doubt finds its way. Learned professors proclaim publicly and emphatically, even while denouncing infidelity, that we can have no certainty, that our evidence of christianity is at best but a high degree of probability. Surely, then, it is time to turn christianity over and see if it have not a side which we have not hitherto observed. Perhaps when we

come to see it on another side, in a new light it will appear unto us more beautiful and have greater power to attract our love and reverence.

The views here presented have won the love and reverence of one man who was once as obstinate an unbeliever as can be found. I know not why they should not have the same effect on others.

More I would say, but I have lingered too long already. If any have been interested in the several personages I have introduced, as having been in some way or other connected with my spiritual conflicts, and who would wish to know their ultimate fate, I must reply by asking where, in the case of any one of us, are those who started with us in life, and whose young hearts responded warmly to our own? Where are the friends and acquaintances we formed, and whose course for a while run parallel with our own? There were many of them, but where are they now? One by one they have dropped away, and we have plodded on, in our turn to drop aside, and be passed by the new throngs pressing onward to an unknown goal.

"And Elizabeth, will you tell us nothing of her?" Pardon me. I have planted wild flowers on her grave, and watered them with my tears.

THE END.